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STARBUKSI

MARK HAMILL as
LUKE SKYWALKER in
RETURN OF THE
JEDI

PLUS

DIRECTOR
TOMMY LEE WALLACE &
SCRIPTER NIGEL KNEALE ON
HALLOWEEN III

AND

FREAKS (1932),
VIDEODRÔME,
MAUSOLEUM



MAUSOLEUM



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STARBURST

STARBURST LETTERS

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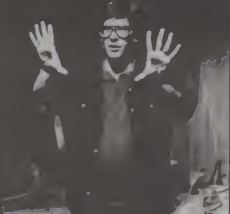
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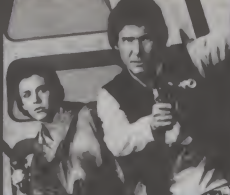
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LETTERS

CENSORSHIP

The following is the distillation of a couple of letters Kev O'Donnell sent to *Starburst* after our lengthy reply to his letter printed in *Starburst* 57.

In my original letter I defended the censorship of "nasty" videos, but I did not specify what kind of censorship, so I took for granted the context of Peter Robinson's letter. When I used the word "censorship", I meant it in the degree to which he advocated it, ie, putting certificates on videos to prevent minors from hiring them. I did not mean that such videos should be suppressed and sent underground, and hence I do not ally myself with the likes of Mary Whitehouse. While I can sympathise with her over some of the things she finds offensive, I fear she is trying to take too great a liberty.

I feel I had better clarify a couple of points:

1) I do not think that (for example) *Apocalypse Now* and *10* are entirely suitable for 12 year olds, but they are far more healthy than the "nasties" as there is some feeling and morality about them. Some of the boys at school have watched the above while they were in the second year, and talking about *10* was like a breath of fresh air after some things. I would only recommend such films in context though.

2) I do not have an unrealistic view about adolescent boys. Boys of 14+ are very nearly adult in some ways. They lack experience and therefore maturity, but they can handle a great deal more than some parents give them credit for. I may not like them watching "nasties", but I don't worry half as much about them at that age.

For what it's worth, I think many 18 rated films could easily be changed to PG, saving the more disturbing and nasty stuff for the older category (not that it really matters — many 15-17 year olds regularly pass for 18. But perhaps it is the principle of the thing).

3) I am the proud possessor of a boxed set of *Tales from the Crypt*, Russ Cochran's beautiful reprints of famed EC Comics title, and I would be the first to criticise the blanket statements and hysteria that led to the demise of companies such as EC, but I still maintain my position that society has some right to impose censorship.

As is well known, EC were not really the villains in the Horror Comics scare of 1954. I find some of the cheaper imitations tasteless and repulsive. EC had style, genius,

good art. I feel they were wronged and the loss of that company's comics is our loss today. However, reading through the *Crypt* collection, I feel that they did go a little too far at times — their suspense, wit and novelty did not need the tasteless pap of severed dripping heads, dismembered bodies and the stark sadism of some stories.

If we could recreate that period of history, I would stand up for some kind of comics code, but not in the terms in which it did operate. I would want something freer, less restrictive, but nonetheless guarding against gross scenes of rape, bizarre sex and sadism in children's comics.

Adult material is another matter, and I do not believe such a code should operate for that.

4) I am not against portraying violence in children's comics. Some of my friends would be — they don't even let their kids have toy guns! True, children play out violence in games with "stabblings", "shootings" and this, in a way, is an attempt to come to terms with real violence, and attempt to "tame" it.

Most children do separate fact from fantasy quite easily. I accept all your points on this, but what happens when we over-indulge in fantasy, making it more like the real thing, or even worse? I'm not just talking about fake stage blood, but more and more cinematic attempts to get something to look and feel real.

The more we raise the threshold between fact and fantasy, the more our resistance level is decreased, no matter how subtle. Are we being



brainwashed by some things? I don't know. I would like to hear some more learned views on this from experts. My guess is that for someone with a well-adjusted background there is very little effect, or lasting effect, but for anyone in a worse situation, it provides a greater stimulus. I used to know a few youths from Moss Side, Manchester. They lapped up the "nasties" and they mimicked too — in street brawls. One of the lads was put away for slashing up someone's face with a razor. Okay, they would have caused agro without certain types of media, but the point is, did they act as a further stimulus, and would they have been batter off without them?

So, are "nasty" videos a bourgeois

distraction for those with such a turn of mind, or are they something which is affecting a certain section of society? I'm not sure. Are we slowly undermining a system of inherited values by constantly raising the resistance barrier to things shocking and nasty? I know that's what the "Festival of Light" preaches, and sometimes I think there may be something to it, but I repeat that I do not agree with their ideas of restricting adults.

Having said this, does society have some sort of responsibility for standards within its creative media? Are there limits, even in a liberal regime? Is there a need for some sort of Obscene Publications Act, given room for discussion and the representation of the views of the



electorate?

I see that Mrs Thatcher has given the thumbs down to a cable porno channel. Should she have held a referendum? If the majority wanted it, should they have had it? Maybe. But if the majority can decide all standards and ethics, do we not run a risk? What if the majority was found to be in sympathy with the National Front? Is might the only right?

There are no easy answers to those things, and despite many things which help me to form my ethical views, I don't claim to have any easy answers either. Think on this, both our viewpoints are subject to limitations and risks, like the Unilateralist who takes the risk of getting rid of bombs and the daterant, risking the holocaust with them.

What I'm advocating is some sort of responsibility on the part of creative people to the younger members of our society. Where we go from here is trickier, but worth thinking about.

Kevin O'Donnell,
Atrincham,
Cheshire.

Alan McKenzie replies: "So, it seems that you and I, Kevin, are not so far apart in our views as it first appeared. You say that there are no easy answers. So do I, up to a point. But what we're actually arguing about here, is aesthetics. I still say you can't legislate against bad taste. And as long as there is an audience out there for what is laughingly referred to as "Video Nasties", the film-makers will continue to churn them out. Sensationalism replaces Art. What's so new about that? That debate has been raging since the days of James Whale and Tod Browning. The names change, the disgust factor changes, but the principles remain the same. The only frightening thing is the likelihood that today's "nasties" will become tomorrow's comedies. After all, Whale's 1931 *Frankenstein* is pretty tame stuff today, though it caused an uproar when originally released.

It seems to me that the easiest target for "nasty" merchants are the young, who don't know any better and don't have the experience or maturity to distinguish between Art and Dross. Perhaps we're all missing the point. Maybe the purveyors of "nastiness" know exactly what their target audience is. In that case, introduce a rating system for videos, the youngsters no longer have access to stuff like

Cannibal *Gerbage-Tip* thereby removing the bulk of the audience for such trips.

With Starburst, we try to guide our readers to what is worthwhile and what isn't. But that's only our opinion. Maybe we should all be a little more vocal about what we want to see and what we don't want to see. After all, the film-makers are only responding to what the market demands.

But, at the end of the day, I still believe that any kind of suppression or muffling is morally wrong in an allegedly democratic society.

And finally, special thanks to readers Michael Lacey (age 14), Richard Fitzgerald, Gary Bennett, Darren Atkins, Peter Lynch, Andrew Gambrell, Gillian Moore, G. Blackley and even dear old Ian Covell, who all added their voices to this debate. I'm just sorry that we couldn't print all their letters. Thank you all.

MORE VIDEO!

Come on, fellas, extract the digit! You feature a genre book page, a tv page, a record page (sometimes) and a John Brosnan page ... but how about bringing Starburst up to date? How about a video page?

I have recently come to the conclusion that a Video Cassette Recorder is a necessary piece of the movie enthusiast's equipment (well, I tell myself that each month when I have to account for the seventeen quid rental). I mean, through what other medium can one jode one's palate with the likes of *Shriek of the Mutilated* or *Invasion of the Blood Farmers* or *The Werewolf and the Yeti*? With the vast number of titles now available, it's becoming increasingly difficult to keep track of every title; we need someone to warn, advise and inform ...

To warn us that *The Tempter* (Interview) is actually *The Antichrist*, that *Renk's The Monster* is the awful *I Don't Want to be Born*, that *The Curse of Death* (Apple) is the tedious *Death Curse of Tertu*, that *Videoform's Lunatic* is the plodding Swedish movie *The Night Visitor* ...

To advise us of the utter tastelessness of *Cannibal Apocalypse* - otherwise *Cannibals in the Streets* (VDP) and of the repulsive ineptness of *Headless Eyes* (Sapphire) ...

To inform us that *Psycho Sisters* (GVI) isn't a genre film, whereas *Interview's Amorous Adventures of a Young Postman* is (it's a soft core vampire film). And that *Oasis*



of the *Zombies* (Filmlend) is actually a remake of the dredded *Zombies Lake* - in fact I am led to believe that *Oasis* scripter A.L. Mariaux is none other than Daniel Lasœur (who penned *Lake*) ...

To answer certain begging questions: what information is there available on the superb *The Slayer* (Vipco)? When is *Paleca* Video releasing *Basket Case* (and which version will it be)? And did Bill Shatner make *Impulse* (Mega Films) on the day that Cameron Mitchell was busy?

Yes, indeed. A genre video guide will go some way to relieving the current, often hit-and-miss method of selection. So, come on, pals. Treat the videophiles to a monthly Video File!

Malcolm J Liddle,
Carrington,
Nottingham.

Video columnist Barry Forshaw replies: "Your wish is our command ... We'll try in our monthly video column to steer you through the murky waters of video rental,

pointing out the hidden treasures (how many people are aware that all major Dario Argento titles are available on Video?) and warning against the dull, the routine and the just plain execrable (the latter I'll include as a footnote to each column). Certainly, deceptive retiding such as you mention and mendacious packaging (e.g. *The Flesh Eaters*) have to be carefully monitored. Genre fans may like to be pointed to the involvement of directors such as Mario Bava in the Steve Reeves *Hercules Unchained* and other peripheral films. But as to warnings re: the "tastelessness" of some titles - well, yes - but you won't find me censuring films on that score - even when only minimal craftsmanship is involved. There are healthy precedents for unrestrained grand guignol!

MEYER WRITES

We have been asked by film director Russ Meyer to print the following letter in reply to Alan Jones interview with actor David Warbeck in cinema 7.

Re: your felling prey to the dishonest vomit of model/actor David Warbeck - page 47 (bottom) of cinema 7, Nov '82.

Specifically: 1) Anouska Hempel was strictly my regrettable second choice for the part of Lady Susan, with no third or fourth choice at hand. My first choice was a suitably protuberant, outrageously cantilevered Italian actress who, most unfortunately, fell ill just before she was to appear in the subject film.

2) Edy Williams was never scheduled to appear in the production, and for the record, it was I that divorced the lady several months after the release of *Slaves/Blackneke*.

3) It was not only funny to see tiny, hardly voluptuous Hempal whip "Mr Black Universe", but a bumper as well - maybe Warbeck envied this activity.

4) I used a megaphone on occasion, but more likely to call Warbeck's attention to his pain-in-the-ass tea breaks.

5) Warbeck's bitchy bullshit about my trying to blow up my old lady's car with dynamite was the unkindest cut of all - dangerous adventurism on both your parts. Unless I receive a proper retraction to this cheap shot, I might just place the whole lot in the hands of my solicitor in London.

Russ Meyer,
London.

PANIC BUTTON!

Hollywood is in a panic. All the studio chiefs are playing the old familiar Film City parlour game: Beat The Strike. Although there's not really much of a threat, much less a hint of it, Hollywood expects an actors' strike once the Screen Actors Guild last hard-earned contract ends on June 30. And so, it's the summer of '81 all over again, even to the extent of a *Raiders* film before overseas cameras, as everyone rushes around, pell-mell, pushing films into action, here, now, today – tonight, dammit! – so they'll be finished before the June 30 deadline and the cinemas will be safe for product until well into the summer of '84 at least.

You'll find many of these accelerated movies listed, as per normal, in the various news paragraphs that follow. There's quite a few surprised among them, too. Like some sudden extra Spielberg production, or instagations, at least. Carpenter and Steve King getting it on, at least. An intriguing 3-D venture. The start of *Dune*, far from *Strika City* in Mexico. Universal's quickie response to Warner Brothers' *Twilight Zone*. Some Millius movies off the shelf, a couple of lookalike Glenn Larson tv hopefuls and George Romero's deal with Marvel. Yes, with us!

Other movies being switched on probably before their prime, and minus any casting, directing or special effects as we went to press, hurriedly ourselves, include... John Guillermin tackling *Sheena, Queen of the Jungle*, now that he's dropped *Brooklyn* (and Momme Terri) Shields, the pests of the desert... Stewart Raffill directing his script of *The Ice Pirates*, set in space... Tim Hutton beginning *Isleman*, starring on Earth... *Star Trek III*... A secret new comedy, said to be set, from the *Airplane!* trio, so secret they're calling it just that for now: *Top Secret*... *Richard Donner's Lady Hawk*, far from strike concerns, in Rome... Sandy Howard's production of *Secrets of the Phantom Caverns*, which sounds as if it needs *Raiders* in the title... Lamar Card's *Ghost Town*... and a whole bevy of 3-D quickies that I'm keeping my eye on for a special-up-date report in a month or so. Suffice for now, to say that 3-D is getting so respectable, I hear that Blake Edwards is moving into it with his own, "wholly owned" as they say, 3-D facility. And George Romero is shooting a ten-minute test film in tri-di, with a feature hanging on the result of his endeavours.

JEDI DATE

But first – the all important date of the year. George Lucas finally unveiled *The Return of the Jedi* to his expectant world in the United States on May 25... in Singapore on May 26... and the Euro-premiere was a twin affair at London's Marble Arch Odeon and the giant Dominion on June 2.

If Lucas doesn't watch out, a certain x-Hollywoodian is going to ruin his box-office for him. Fella by the name of Reagan. His White House cronies refer to Reagan calling Russia an evil empire as his "Darth Vader speech." And, of course, the one about anti-missile laser beams is called "The Star Wars speech." It's Andropov's *Empire Strikes Back* speech, I'm worried about...

E.T. II

The way I hear it, from someone who's read it, the E.T. II scenario is futuristic, all right. Elliott

will be in his twenties – although Henry Thomas is the only star from the original to be booked for the sequel (flashbacks I suppose). And the story takes place both here and up in E.T.'s world. Just remember you read it here, first.

TOBE 3-D

Maybe I got my wires crossed, or maybe he's changed course in mid-dream. But Tobe Hooper's not re-hashing *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* in 3-D. What he is doing – a mid-tight security – is tri-di-ing a new version of George Romero's 1968 classic in a new wrapping called *Return of the Living Dead*. The revised script is by our old mate Dan O'Bannon.

At least, that's Tobe's plan... very much a case of Tobe or not to be, though.

Man behind the surprise movie is Tom Fox, described as a Chicago "money manager" (he could sure do with one of those myself). He's related to some of the top Hollywood industrialists, including a former Universal president. Tom, therefore, has always been fascinated by movies. Some time back he worked in association with Romero's Pittsburgh group, which tends to back up his tale of acquiring *Living Dead* rights from George. Once he (said he) had those, Tom Fox found little trouble in adding O'Bannon and Hooper to the deal – quickly snapped up for foreign dinemas, like ours, by Britain's Hemdale group, which also has secured video rights.

John Daly, the Hemdale chief, is keeping a tight lip on the venture, beyond admitting to a \$4.5 million budget. Peanut! "The plot cannot be revealed," he says. "The film will be shot entirely on closed sets under the tightest security." The reason for that could well be the fact that Romero has denied granting any re-make rights to his stories at all...

The 3-D film's title, of course, is the same as that announced by Romero's ax-writer and co-producer, John Russo, some years ago. Russo never got the money together for his *Return of the Living Dead* and launched himself with the poorly received *Midnight*, instead. Keep him out of court!

ROMERO & US!

George Romero, meantime, is into other things. Such as a new deal between his Laurel

Entertainment Inc. and Marvel Entertainment Group. The object of this marriage is a baby. A new superhero, in fact. I imagine the result will take rather less than the usual gestation period and the Laurel/Marvel – or is that a Marvel/Laurel? – infant will be thrusting hungrily into our lives in a completely unique package deal before the end of the year. That is to say: one movie... one comic... one book... and of course, all the usual attendant merchandising. Like nappies, feeding bottles, safety-pins and potties, no doubt.

I'll have more – hopefully – on this intriguing marriage when the lovebirds are over the honeymoon and they – our masters, in particular – design to give us extra tid-bits at our next feeding time.

ROMERO'S DEAD, ETC

By George, he's done it. Romero also reports he has completed the final script of his *Living Dead* trilogy – known as *Day of the Dead*, for the moment. As mentioned before, he is due, contractually, to start shooting it by January 1985. He has plenty to keep him busy until then. He's working still on his *Frankenstein* screenplay. His producer-partner, Richard Rubenstein, says the script adheres closely to Mary Shelley's book, only more so. "There are stones left unturned with respect to the original material that George would like to show on the screen," I bet!

Romero is also preparing *Creepshow II* – simply as writer-producer this time. He's scripting a bunch of more Steve King stories and hasn't chosen a director as yet. (Or has he? see next story). King, himself, is close to completing his third draft of *The Stand*, which will probably be George's next directing assignment, although he's also keen to shoot Michael Palmer's first novel, *The Sisterhood*, an instant best-seller Laurel snapped up. It's about mercy-killing nurses.

ROMERO FINDS

Romero's Laurel combine is also beginning to pick up projects not necessarily to be made by His Geomorph. For example, the *Creepshow* composer, John Harrison, will turn director for *Imagine That*, a low-budget chiller based on a Romero tale. And the rights have also been bought of a Carol Marner rape-thriller which considerably switches the

sexual roles around. The hero is a lady cop on New York City's rape squad and the rapist she's after is another woman – whose victims are men. The feminists are gonna love this one!

ROMERO 3-D

And then there's the tri-di project... As mentioned in his recent *Starburst* interview, Romero is fascinated with the new 3-D process owned by UA Communications. He has written a short – all of ten minutes – which he's going to shoot as a test both for himself and the process. If everyone likes that, he'll go ahead and write a full movie. And yes, definitely an original. "We want," explains Richard Rubenstein, "to write a screenplay from page one for 3-D, not adapt something to it."

KING UPDATE

Hardly a month goes by lately without some Stephen King story or novel going into production. Time then, for a recap, particularly as his new book is out, and Playboy recently published his *Word Processor* tale (hit the Delete key and it wipes out... people) and *The Twilight Zone* magazine has come out with his novelette, *The Raft*.

So... 1. Lewis Teague has finished *Cujo*. 2. David Cronenberg is close to completing *The Dead Zone*. 3. Milton Subotsky has several Steve shorts in *Fright Night*. 4. George Romero is adapting more for *Creepshow II* and... 5. will direct *The Stand* and... 6. the King/Romero duo are also combining for a Pay-TV chiller (and Steve is a guest on one of Romero's Laurel-made TV chat-show half-hours, so is Harvey Kurtzman).

Is that all? No siree. No. 7 is maybe the best news of the month...

KING/CARPENTER II

John Carpenter is directing a Steve King novel after all... The next one to hit the stands. Within a few months of Universal shutting the *Firestarter* door after the budget had bolted (not to mention after *The Thing* slurped down the pen), Carpenter is born again with a new Columbia deal to helm the movie version of The King's next novel. Title: *Christine*. Subject: A car that is... well, possessed. (Makes a change from all those



other cars in life that are repossessed).

Shooting was due to begin in April from a Bill Phillips script. And the movie is being co-produced by a pair of old Carpenter mates, Richard Kobritz and Larry Franco. Richard produced John's 1978 tele-movie, *Someone Is Watching Me* (he also produced Tobe Hooper's 1979 version of Steve King's *Salem's Lot*); while Larry, nearly always John's first assistant director, exec-produced *The Fog* (1980) and fully produced *Escape From New York* (1981). Sounds as if *Christine* is in safe hands. Certainly, Steve King must be delighted. As he told me at Cannes last year (in the *Starburst* 55 interview), he reckons Richard Kobritz is the last genius left in American tv; and rates his Carpenter tele-movie as the best suspense on the American tube with the exception of *Duel*.

Whether Kurt Russell gets to join the *Christine* party, I'm not sure yet. Since becoming indispensable to Carpenter vehicles, Kurt has moved up in the world. He partners Meryl Streep in Mike Nichols' *Silkwood* and is now finishing *Swing Shift* with Goldie Hawn and a George Romero find, Ed Harris.

NINJA NO-NO!

John Carpenter is free to go into King country for the same reason that the *Jaws* producers are threatening to pull their product away from 20th Century-Fox. Carpenter should have been into *The Ninja* by now for the Dick Zanuck-David Brown team. Except Fox had second thoughts about the Eric Van Lustbader best-seller; and not for the first time. The studio didn't go much for W.D. Richter's script when Irvin Kershner was due to make the movie with it; it was then rumoured, Robert Redford, about a year ago.

Considering that Zanuck and Brown made *The Verdict*, the only big success Fox has had during the three years Sherry Lansing was production chief (though she had nothing to do with the Newman film), they are more than slightly miffed by their treatment at the studio where Dick Zanuck, himself, used to be production chief. They say they've offered a dozen projects to the studio over the last three years - *The Verdict* was the only one given the green light. Zanuck and Brown are, in a phrase, fed up with Fox.

Four months after rejecting *The Ninja*, the studio got interested in the boom again. This

time, Zanuck and Brown (they also made *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* and *The Sting* in their time), signed John Carpenter to handle what would have been his first major, non-fantasy feature. He re-wrote the Richter script with his old partner, Tommy Lee Wallace (director of *Halloween III*). The budget was priced at \$12 million. Not so high, considering the vital locations in Japan and New York. The studio moaned about the money, despite the obvious fact that the longer it dallied, the more the film will cost. In fact, it's cost \$4 million without a shot being fired. Irvin Kershner's sweet deal called for him to be paid whether they made the movie or not (I'd love that kind of deal with *Starburst* whether I wrote my column or not) and that took care of about \$750,000. Carpenter's overall fee came to about the same... then there's the various writers involved and the price for the rights in the first place.

"It's baffling to me why they would reject the story," says an irate Zanuck, although he knows full well, *The Ninja's* gloss (erotic as well as exotic) had been hurt by Cannon's *Ninja* quickies, but he insists, "This picture will get made." And by Carpenter, it seems. He remains the film's official director and not even Zanuck and Brown can afford to pay off another director for not making the film. Besides, Carpenter wants to make it. Understandably. It's a great yarn, admittedly melding the twin of East and West for once.

If I were Zanuck, or Brown, I would have given the project to Kurosawa and have done with it. He could have knocked it off, in great style, and no doubt at half the price, a year or so ago.

CARPENTER II

Another of Carpenter's old mates is joining the directors' clan. This is the actor Nick Castle, aka *The Shape* in *Halloween*, and John's co-writer on the forever hanging around EMI Western, *El Diablo*. Nick starts shooting *The Last Starfighter* in May at the MGM studios in Burbank. Universal and the Dallas-rich Lorimar combine is putting up the \$12.5 million required for (mainly the effects off) this light-hearted fantasy which sounds to me like *E.T.*, or what we probably want *E.T.* to be. In short, a young boy is recruited from Earth to help save ETs in their own world.



Director

John Carpenter (left) on the set of his most recent film, *The Thing*.

The sets for the film and all the effects will be created by John Whitney, Gary Demos and Digital Productions. In other words, they're all going to be done by mirrors... but computers. Hence the big budget, the biggest of the three Universal-Lorimar films, the other two including a little something called *Dallas - The Movie*, without its Principal attraction.

SPIELBIGGIE

Questions always asked of Steven Spielberg is: When is he going to grow up and make real movies? He has an answer now. Universal has bought him Thomas Keneally's recent Booker McConnell prize-winning book, *Schindler's List*. Universal chief Sid Sheinberg (who gave Spielberg his first Hollywood job directing *Night Gallery* in 1969) wants Steven to make it. It is, runs the Sheinberg line, about time he tackled something different. Keneally's book is that, all right. Although winning the big British prize as the Best Fiction of 1982, the book is a factual account of a German industrial smuggling his Jewish workers out of the Fatherland during the war. It's far removed from anything

Steven has made as a movie - and his first brush with a best-seller since *Jaws*. While it could be made as a fast-moving *Raiders* of the *Third Reich*, the "documentary novel" is a more emphatic work than that. "A masterful account of the growth of the human soul," as the Los Angeles Times phrased it.

Spielberg hasn't actually agreed to direct yet. As usual, he's holding his cards close to his chest. In announcing the book's acquisition (at a real bargain price, I gather), Universal could only mention "special pride in the association of" Spielberg with the project. He doesn't actually read many books, of course - he's no intellectual - but I gather he's long been fascinated by Keneally's work and will agree to direct. He feels safe with a book, you see. Since all those lawsuits, alleging that *E.T.*, *Pottergeist*, *Raiders*, etc., derived from other writers' scripts, Steven's lawyers have forbidden him to read any screenplays. Once that word gets out, it's going to be tough for money-hungry writers and their lawyers claiming he's cribbed their work.

And to welcome Steven back to the Universal lot, I hear Sheinberg is building him a special office suite - in Mexican adobe style. With the money he's made Universal since *E.T.*, I'm surprised it's not an exact replica of Buck House.

RAIDERS II

Well, it looks as if we can forget all about *Raiders of the Forbidden City*. Ain't no such film! Latest word I have on Lucasberger II, which will have begun shooting by the time you read this, is that the coverall monicker of *The Further Adventures of Indiana Jones* and the diminutive, *Indy 2*, have finally been parted to reveal... *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Death*. Sounds a bit of a mouthful to me, and following that eleventh hour switch from *Revenge to Return of the Jedi*, I wouldn't believe any George Lucas title anyone until it's printed the premiere invites!

Spielberg is directing the prequel - but, of course - and Harrison Ford is, naturally playing *Indy* again. That much is certain. Final locations, however, are not India and mainland China as Lucasfilm hoped for; close enough - Sri Lanka and Hong Kong. The first film's producer, Frank Marshall, joins George as executive producer because - nice touch,



THINGS TO COME

this—Lord Lucas has handed the full production reins to Robert Watts, the highly praised associate producer of *Raiders* and *Empire Strikes Back*. This is a well earned promotion for Robert, a punctilious British veteran, who keeps the British Lucasfilm team well-oiled (even when having to split *Raiders* for a month due to appendicitis). He's worked on such Bonds as *Thunderball* (1965) and *You Only Live Twice* (1967) as well as *Papillon* (1973), before joining the fairly unknown Lucas with his no-hope little venture called *Star Wars*.

SPIELBERGERS

As Indy rolled anew, two of the original film's cast, big John Rhys-Davies and Ronald Lacey, were together again in *Brooks Shields*' much troubled *Sahara* movie in Israel, while the dastardly suave Belloc, Paul Freeman, has been wooing Alain Delon's girlfriend, Mireille Darc, in her newest French release, *If She Says Yes, I Won't Say No*.

While Spielberg is away in Sri Lanka, Hong Kong and of course, in and out of *E.T.* studios, two new ventures instigated by his interest in new film-maker and old chums started rolling under the Warner Brothers flag in America. *Fandango* is an instant re-play, or expansion of a student film by Kevin Reynolds, Spielberg's latest discovery—and *Gremkins* is a new slice of science fiction which Joe Dante is helming. Dante, of course, is one of the *Twilight Zone* directors. His new script, by the way, is by a certain Chris Columbus... (For *Universal*, Spielberg's also set up an ad film called, for now, *G.I.*)

No one at Warners yet seems sure if Spielberg will be taking any form of credit on either of these projects. He's not producing, *per se*; Tim Zinneman is overseeing the film school graduate's Hollywood debut and Mike Finnell is producing the Dante opus—so at least neither director will find himself in the *Tobe Hooper* predicament. Steve might, though, have a toppermost credit on the lines of: Steven Spielberg presents... Then again, if he really wants to be like living Thalberg, MGM's wunderkind production chief of the 30s, he won't take a credit at all, knowing full well that everyone who should know will know he had a digit or two in the enterprises. As Thalberg used to say, "Credit you give yourself isn't worth having."

MR AND MRS FORD

Congratulations on, I'm sure, all of us to Harrison Ford and his new bride, Melissa Mathison. They finally tied the knot in Santa Monica in March. *Time* magazine wanted to see the ceremony as one of a Hollywood merger, between the writer of history's No 1 film (*E.T.*—where you been?) and the star of No 2, 3 and 5!

We'll never see Harrison's latest kick, by the way. He narrates what amounts to a commercial for the Will Rogers Institute, directed by Doug Wyllie and shown on ABC American tv networks.

ETC

And rather than incur the wrath of readers like Hornchurch's Keith Morris and let you know how much money *E.T.* has earned in the last 15.4 seconds, let me just report the following news from Japan where, naturally, the film has also found through the "loof". Don't fret, Keith, I'm not talking money—simply bums

on seats. In the Land of the Rising Datsun, *E.T.* is now the first ever movie to have been seen by ten million people. That, as they say, is a lotta bums.

STEVEN'S ZONE

Spielberg's top-secret episode in the *Twilight Zone* movie is Richard Matheson's re-write of George Clayton Johnson's *Kick The Can*. Lamont Johnson directed the original during the third (1961/62) season of the Rod Serling tv show. In Spielberg's version, Scatman Crothers—*from The Shining*—is the chap rejuvenating people in an old folk's home. Most of them don't enjoy being young again—all that pain of growing up. One only gets a kick out of the idea. Two, if you count the director. He knocked the short off in six days.

ANTHOLOGY LIVES

It may not have sundered many box-office records, but the King-George Creepshow has started a renaissance of anthology movies. Milton Subotsky is preparing *Fright Night* (more Steve King tales). Spielberg, of course, has produced *Twilight Zone* with pals Landis, Dante and George Miller. And now here comes *Universal's* reply—a movie version of *One Step Beyond*. I must say I wonder why, as the 94 half-hour black-white ABC tv shows, circa 1959-61, were the least effective of the American tube's fascination with late night fantasy, supernatural and ESP thrills. Really bland stuff compared to the magic of Rod Serling's *Twilight Zone* and *Night Gallery*, even Boris Karloff's *Thriller* series and, of course, *The Outer Limits*.

One Step Beyond has one (questionable) advantage over its old rivals. Its presenter, indeed the director of all 94 shows (he starred in one), is alive. Indeed, John Newland started a warmed-over version of the old shows a couple of years back. One *Further Step Beyond*. But that was pretty lacklustre stuff too. The way I remember it, the original show was close to *Beyond The Pale*, bland stuff, lacking the grit and wit of the Serling shows, certainly lacking writers like Serling and Richard Matheson and their far more inventive directors. If *Beyond* was bland, it was because Newland was bland.

According to the show's creator, Mervin Gerard, all the stories were based on fact. For the movie, I guess they'll be fiction—and in the hands, so far, of directors like Walter Hill, Paul Bartel and Australia's Richard Franklin.

There's more than enough of the old casts still alive and kicking to chose from, if they want to be really nostalgic about it. Patrick McNeen was in the fourth show, for example. Other tales featured the almost teenage-looking William Shatner, Jack Lord, Louise Fletcher, Yvette Mimieux, Robert Blake, Elizabeth Montgomery, Charlie Bronson, Robert Loggia, Pernell Roberts and director-to-be Ralph Nelson. Trying not to look so young in *The Visitor* episode was a 23-year-old Warren Beatty, made up to look 50 or so. And in the series' last dozen or so stories, all made in London, the Brits got a look in. People like Chris Lee, Donald Pleasance, obviously; and Adrienne Cori, Anton Diffring, Peter Wyngarde, Graham Stark, even dear old Moneypenny, herself, Lois Maxwell.

This is one old telly-series that today's movie can really improve upon. And then what, *Night Gallery* and *Outer Limits*, I suppose. There must be at least two more taken



Aussies to join such director-teams, wouldn't you say?

TV ANTHOLOGY, TOO

Universal could be using the *Beyond* scripting process to help provide material for its plans for a brand new anthology creepshow on the bow. *Nightmares*, they're calling it. Joseph Sargent, the singer and actor who cut his directing teeth on tube-series like *Guns, Gams, Lassie*, *The Invaders* and *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* is directing the pilot show, with scripts from one of his producers, Chris Crowe. If it works, I suppose we'll have a *Nightmares* film in a couple of years.

To make sure the series works, I trust *Universal* will do what the best tele-anthologies used to do—let the new kids on the block write and direct the shows. It was, after all, only fourteen years ago that the kid directing a *Night Gallery* story answered to the name of Steven Spielberg.

HILL'S TRIO

Before taking that one step beyond, Walter Hill has to complete his *Universal* movie, *Streets of Fire*. Hill, you'll recall as one of the writer-producers of *Alien*. Currently, he's hotter than he's ever been, thanks to *48 Hrs.* He's using his heat to good advantage. With writer Larry Gross, Hill has created a new soldier-of-fortune hero—no superhero, just a very Hillish type. He exists in a futuristic society. A sort of running blade rather than a blade runner. Hill has designed a trilogy around the guy, if the first one take off. Which it might... given a snapper title.

QUICK TAKES

Buck Rogers—that was, Gil Gerard, tries the tube heroics again as Johnny Blue, once various unit illnesses clear up and allow the schedule to get it on... Sean Connery said to be netting a cool million (dollars, natch) for his six days' work on *The Green Knight* with Miles O'Keefe. That's on top of Sean's \$5 million for bringing Bond back alive... Faye Dunaway could be the Brand of *Supergirl*. She's considering playing Helen Slater's Momma... Looks as if Sam Raimi's *Agatha Christie*, I think it's safe to assume, it ain't... Licking her *Videodrome* wounds, Debbie Harry intends proving she can act on the Broadway stage... Australian director Fred Schepisi directing *The Iceman* with a leg broken in three places... See what I mean about Hollywood panicking and making sure all current movies are in the can by June 30...!

DUNE BEGINS

Elephant Man David Lynch started directing Frank Herbert's *Dune* at the Churubusco studios in Mexico City on March 30... just ten years after the first film version was announced as a British venture. Back in 1972, the Hollywood cinematographer Hawell Wexler was pacted to direct a small budget affair starring a terribly British cast: Patrick McGowan, Susan Hampshire and stage star John Neville. But nothing ever came of producer Alexander Jacobs or his plans.

The French turned on to Herbert in 1975 when Alexander Jodorowsky set up a \$3 million to star his son Brontis in the lead role of Paul, backed by Euro-names like Laurent Terzieff, Andrea Ferrel, and almost inevitably, Orson Welles. Jodorowsky, riding the crest of a cult wave with *El Topo* wasn't stopping there. He had ideas for a bunch of almost *Around The World In 80 Days* like cameos from such celebrities as Salvador Dali, Mick Jagger, Alain Delon, Charlotta Rampling, Pierre Clementi and even the late Gloria Swanson. Douglas Trumbull was in charge of the effects, until realising the scanty budget could not pay for them—and Dan O'Bannon took over the effects chores with designs by H.R. Giger.

Dune fizzled, but the O'Bannon-Giger connection led to *Alien*—and sure enough by the time Dino De Lauro Dum got his hands on *Dune*, it was down to Ridley to direct. Then, *Blade Runner* got in the way and David Lynch started pre-production work on the film almost a year ago. Time enough to re-work a script from the previous drafts by the Elephant Man and Frances team of Christopher Devere and Eric Berger, plus Frank Herbert himself.



Lynch chose 19-year-old Seattle unknown Kyle MacLachlan for the Paul role. He's supported by such veterans as Max Von Sydow, Silvana Mangano, José Ferrer, Aldo Ray (really!), plus British stars Sting, and Freddie Jones and Francesca Annis from the Dune-inspired *Knell*. Freddie was in *Elephant Man*, of course, but this is really his year—having just been *Fellini's* top star in *And The Ship Sails On* in Rome. Von Sydow, Ming in *Dino's* *Flash Gordon*, reported to Mexico City direct from the L.A. of *item*, *Dreamscape*, which, in turn, he'd joined after playing *Blodfeld* in the Connery-Bond, *Never Say Never Again*. Silvana Mangano, if you didn't know, is Mrs. Dino De Dum Dum.

Britain's camera ace and often director Freddie Francis is the cinematographer (as he was on *Elephant Man*) and Carlo Rambaldi (like who else, right?) supplies the main effects, such as the desert planet's sand worms. The whole package is costing around \$45 million, making *Dune* somewhat expensive movie of the year.

Just to avoid all the name-calling in columns like mine, I notice that Dino De Dumburns has moved himself into the executive producer strata, leaving the physical production of *Dune*—the banquets or the brickbats—to his and Silvana's daughter, Raffaella. He's right, of course. I'm too much of a gent to start badmouthing such a lovely lady. More than that, I wish her well.

MILES O'TROUBLE

As I indicated in my review of his would-be French James Bond movie, *Terminate With Extreme Prejudice*, Miles O'Keefe's Euro-career is not exactly redolent with Clint Eastwood sheen. O'Keefe's experience is very useful to such a neophyte actor. He can, as he admitted in our interview (also not yet printed), make mistakes and no one will see them back in Hollywood. Not so, Miles Comworld, which until recently had Burt Reynolds as Chairman of the board, has bought O'Keefe's spaghetti *Conan—A Tor, The Fighting Eagle*. Comworld then made the mistake of showing the movie to the film trade Press.

"The sheer incompetence of the effort defies much analysis," went one review. "The entire picture appears to have been photographed at different times of the day, the soundtrack mostly sounds like it's been piped in through a megaphone and the overall production values raise the schlock sci-fis of the Fifties to new levels of sophistication." That was the *Variety* critic, that was. But then you know it. Only *Variety* still refers to sci-fi as... although I have to say, I once heard Spielberg use the dread term, *A Tor* (the first one; subtitled, *The Fighting Eagle*) is not of anyway; it tries to be sword and sorcery, with two much of the former and not enough of the latter in the script (says *A Tor* to a girl: "Altruism doesn't fit you any more than the maternity route...") or in the talent of the director David Hills, who's responsible for the quirkie sequel (off-cuts from the same film, perhaps?), *A Tor, The Invincible*.

This could explain why Miles' third Italian thud 'n' blunder item, which looks like *A Tor II* from the publicity, but is called *The Death Angel* will be directed in July by a certain Chris Trainor... She's associate producer of both the previous romps. What's more to the point, she also happens to be Miles' manager. Must be about the first time in screen history that a manager has directed a client in a

movie.

O'Keefe's co-star, by the way, is *Raiders* nasty, Ronald Lacey. Can't wait to see tubby Ron in beakyin' y-fronts...

MILIUS MOVES

Miles O'Keefe's French spy movie will have to switch titles if and when it's bought by America. John Milius wants his title back. "Terminate with extreme prejudice," comes from a Miliusian line at the start of *Apocalypse Now*, when Harrison Ford's Col Lucas gives Martin Sheen his assassination orders. The would-be British Fleming, Gerard de Villiers picked up on that line for the English Anglo-Saxon title of the film he calls *Terrence à San Salvador* in Francophone countries. But now an old Milius scenario has been picked up from a Warner Brothers shelf by the same people who found *First Blood* gathering dust on the same shelves and this Milius movie is called—*Extreme Prejudice*. Looks as if the *First Blood* director, Ted Kotcheff, will help the film and not Milius although Big John is rewriting his original screenplay bringing it more up to anti-terrorist technical date.

While dealing with the Caroleo Co about this old script, Milius has also interested the suddenly hot combine in another of his ideas—*East and West*. This could start shooting in India before the end of the year. That is, if you want to bring your diaries up to date, just after *Extreme Prejudice* but before *First Blood II*, which is sub-titled: *The Mission*.

CONAN II

Conan, King of Thieves is the title. And it's to be made minus Milius and, indeed, minus any of Big John's Nietzschean influences. In fact, the way producer Edward R. Pressman explains it, the title could have been *Raiders of The Nietzschean Philosophy*. In short, the tone is lighter, just another adventure in Conan's workaday life as scripted by the *Fire and Ice* comicbook pair, Roy Thomas and Jerry Conway—by a story by Bary Windsor Smith, not Robert E. Howard.

It's another of the movies needing to rush into action, not so much to avoid the alleged actors' strike (as it'll be shooting, like most, in Mexico) but in order to hit America's summertime screens in '84. Arnold Schwarzenegger, naturally, continues in the title role and unless removes fast, *Armie*—or Pressman—might have to direct. The top New Zealander Roger Donaldson (*Smash Palace* etc) was set to helm the movie. But then Dino took him off *Bounty* and in charge of his *Mutiny on the Bounty* re-make.



I should have the new director for you next month, plus more from producer Edward Pressman about his other of movie plans.

BIXBY WIZARDRY

Before becoming half of *The Incredible Hulk*, Bill Bixby was the hero and sometime director of *The Magician* series. Presumably that's why (Tellywood minds do think that way) he directed the latest attempt to bring sword and sorcery to primetime TV. The show is *Wizards and Warriors* and did not have enough of either. Jeff Conaway, from the *Taxi* series and *Grease* before that, was the far too modern hero, topping a cast of the usual tele-pilot new faces, such as Julia Duffley's princess. Co-producer Bill Richmond's plot would more to Ian Fleming than Camelot. Conaway and his inevitable sidekick had an hour to unlock a bomb hidden and primed in a gift to some king. As well as these warriors, two wizards were searching out an answer to the ticking device—the king's wife, Ian Wolfe, and the villain's, played by British expatriate Clive Revill (last seen, by me anyway, playing Chaplin in *Movie!*). All four would have been better occupied in sorting out the problem with the script which was so racy it could have been called a heavy metal *Starsky and Hutch*.

If the pilot ever makes a full series (which I doubt, even though it would allow Warner Brothers to make use of *Excalibur* out-takes), Bill Bixby won't be around to help. He's busy with his own new series, *Goodnight Beantown*. (Who's kidding?). It's another of those cannibalistic tele-shows, feeding off its own icons. Bixby is a Boston TV network newsreader fighting rating ratings with a new co-anchorperson—his one-time wife from the *Hulk* days, Mariette Hartley. On paper it sounds terrible. With Bixby and the delish Mariette in a love-hate bender every week, it could work.

SIMON SAYS

Meanwhile, the *Hulk* is being re-born... kind of... in a two-hour N.B.C. pilot called *Manimal*. This is the latest inspiration from Glenn Larson, the man behind *Gal Guy*, *Buck Rogers*, *Battlestar Galactica*, *Magnum* and, or so it would seem, nearly every other Universal, and these days, 20th Century-Fox tele-filler. Having made Tom Selleck and saved the careers of various people, such as Lee Majors, Glenn is pinning his star on his own Simon MacKordikale this time. Fresh from *Jaws 3-D*, Simon will play the professional type who works as a police consultant by day and fights crime by night, when he changes into a variety of animals, notably a

black panther. Russ Mayberry is directing Larson's script, which had room for Melody Anderson, part of the *Logan's Run* and *Battlestar Galactica* shows, before making her movie debut as Dale Arden in Mike Hodges' *Flash Gordon* movie.

The title of the possible newseries derives, no doubt, from the moniker chosen by American International Pictures to describe the excellent make-up effect work by John Chambers, Dan Streikepe and Tom Burman for *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1977)... Humanimals.

In case NBC don't order a full series, Glenn Larson, as usual, has a similar show on the drawing board. So get ready to welcome...

AUTOMAN

On the back burner and being made ready as a possible A.B.C. pilot movie, just 90 minutes this one, is Glenn Larson's thin re-write of *Manimal—Automan*. The hero, once again a professional type. He's into computers. He creates an after-got-up of his machines, a being made by a computer who—naturally—becomes a crimefighter, but again like *Manimal*, *Automan* can only perform (as it were) by night. No casting announced as yet for Mr. Computer because, quite obviously, *Automan* depends on the success of *Manimal*. If one works, the other will be snapped up as all American TV networks make a fetish of copying each other's formats.

And if NBC drop *Manimal*, and therefore ABC drop *Automan*, Glenn Larson could always mix the two and sell it to CBS with Simon MacKordikale or some other Selleck clone creating a partner out of a computer and calling it *Autoanimal*... it's what they call art in Tellywood.

Seems to me, Glenn would have more instantaneous success, if his hero either turned into or computer-created an E.T. that busted crime by night.

OBITUARY

Wally Veevers, one of the giants of optical effects, died from a heart attack at his London home, while still working on about his 73rd film, Michael Mann's *The Keep*. Wally, who was 65, had a career spanning one of the richest collections of credits among British film technicians—everything from *Things To Come* in 1935 to Oscar nominations for 2001, *Guns of Navarone*, *Superman* and *Excalibur*. He also added his optical magic to such movies, and for such top directors as David Lean's *Lawrence of Arabia*, *Chaplin's A King in New York*, Lord Olivier's *Henry V* and *Hamlet*, Sir Carol Reed's *The Third Man*, Sir Noel Coward's *In Which We Serve*, Sir Richard Attenborough's *A Bridge Too Far*, Rene Clair's *The Ghost Goes West* and Josef von Sternberg's never finished, *I, Claudius* (1935).

Michael Mann, the Chicago director who learnt his stuff at the London Film School, was quick to book Wally for his first feature in Britain. They worked closely on designing the effects for the best Gothic horror number, starring *The Boat's* Jürgen Prochnow. Now it's impossible for the *Keep* to keep it's American June 3 premiere date as the important effects about ten per cent of the film, says Mann are having to be filmed out among Wally Veevers' assistants and other optical effects firms, adding about eight weeks and "a few hundred thousand dollars" to the \$12 million budget.

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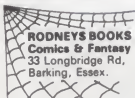
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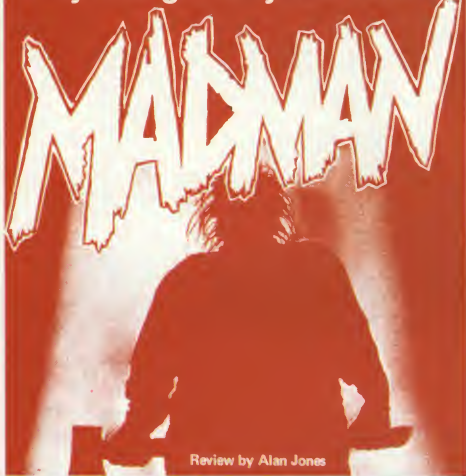
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They thought they were alone



Review by Alan Jones



Have you heard the one about the crazed psycho on the rampage in a Summer Camp? No? Well, if you are sitting comfortably, then I'll begin.

It's the weekend before Thanksgiving at a camp for particularly gifted children and the staff are all sitting around a campfire scaring each other with creepy stories. One concerns Madman Marz, who took an axe to his wife and kids and escaped the local lynch mob to disappear without a trace. "But don't speak his name above a whisper," the campers are warned, "Or else the disfigured maniac will return to answer whoever has called him." Nobody believes all this nonsense, of course, and they start shouting out Marz' name. Guess what? He returns, and pretty soon the leafy glades and darkened cabins are splattered with blood as headless corpses, strangulation victims and mutilated bodies are dragged back to the Marz country residence to be meat-hooked in the cellar.

Toss in a synthesised score and two songs — one accompanying some tender love play in a jacuzzi — and I'm sure you are all as keen to see *Madman* as I was!

Forget it. There is not one iota of originality in this depressing and insulting steal from the *Friday the 13th* series with a touch of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* thrown in for good measure.

As bored as I was watching *Madman*, it would be unfair of me to say that I didn't jump. I did but this was probably due more to the music startling me awake. In truth, I mentally screamed more at that tired old device rearing its ugly head again. You all know it well by now — the "Wait here and I'll go and see if I can find the others alone" syndrome. The fifth example of this in *Madman* tests one's patience to the limit.

Finally getting a release after being on the shelf for over a year now, this Gary Sales production directed by Joe Giannone should have been picked up by Paramount and released as *Friday the 13th Part 4* and have done with it.

Madman is a carbon copy of one of the most famous fright films of our time — the saddest thing is that it never once tries to cut out its own identity somewhere along the line. But there again, being as cynical as one is about the exploitation industry, perhaps it was never meant to.



Review by Alan Jones



TOMMY LEE WALLACE ON HALLOWEEN



Witchcraft enters the computer age in *Halloween III: Season of the Witch*. The film has been a moderate hit in both America and France and moved the usually staid critic of The New York Times, Vincent Canby, to say "Halloween III means to be funny and frequently is. The sets are unusually good and the director clearly has a fondness for the clichés he is parodying and he does it with style".

The director Canby mentions is Tommy Lee Wallace and his directorial debut with *Halloween III* is the culmination of a long and close alliance with one of his old school friends — John Carpenter.

Born on October 8th, 1949 in Bowling Green, Kentucky, Wallace attended both the Ohio University in Athens and the University of Southern California in Los Angeles where he studied design and film production. His graduation film made in 1974 was called *Starman in November* although this was somewhat eclipsed by his work on the seminal John Carpenter film *Dark Star* on which he was associate art director. Art direction and sound effects editor on *Assault on Precinct 13* followed, with the dual chores of production designer and picture editor on both *Halloween* and *The Fog* next. Wallace is also a member of the Los Angeles based vocal group "The Coup de Villes" and although he starts work soon on a new film called *Motel*, with three other scripts in the pipeline — the long awaited *El Diablo*, *The Ninja* both co-

written with Carpenter and *Skins*, the current thoughts on his mind concern only the recent birth of a baby daughter with his actress wife, Nancy Loomis, who you will remember as Annie in *Halloween*.

Tommy Lee Wallace was originally scheduled to direct *Halloween II* (the chance eventually went to Rick Rosenthal) and he turned it down, in his own words, "for a million reasons, the main one being I felt it was too confining a project to be totally satisfactory. I felt it was a trap. It was a good opportunity to direct but at the same time meant I would have to pick up with the same characters two minutes after the first film had finished and I felt that it would have been the easy way out just to imitate John Carpenter's style which was all I felt you could do with the project. All I would have gotten out of the film — and what a lot of people thought was worth it — was the chance to direct but I knew it would be hack work, pure and simple. As it turned out I waited and waited and eventually *Halloween III* turned up which was totally different and struck me as lots of fun and it would give me the creative leeway which was missing from *Halloween II*. Looking back I'm happier than ever that I passed up *Halloween II* as the time frame was horrendous and even more of a pressure cooker situation than *Halloween III* turned out to be which was pretty intense as it was".

During the period of waiting in between the two sequels, Wallace was called

to a meeting with producer Dino De Laurentis. "He asked me to read the proposed script for the upcoming sequel to *The Amityville Horror*. It wasn't much good and didn't make any sense to me at all because it was totally fictitious. I told them that the only way to approach the idea was in the form of a prequel as there was so much factual information that happened before the Lutz family moved in that would make the basis for a good scare tale. They liked the idea and hired me to write it. I know it only started with fact and then moved way off into left field but at least it had its roots in truth which I felt was important to any story concerning the Amityville phenomena". The resultant film, *Amityville 2: The Possession*, was a far more satisfactory whole than the original film and must have been successful because *Amityville 3D* is now on the way, something which Wallace has nothing at all to do with. "To be honest I don't have the slightest interest in it. I can't imagine it being anything else other than the worst exploitation using fictitious characters".

Halloween III: Season of the Witch credits Tommy Lee Wallace as not only director but writer too, due to a well reported falling out with British writer Nigel Kneale over his original screenplay. "Joe Dante was originally going to direct the picture and I knew that Kneale's script was rolling along nicely. When Dante pulled out, for reasons I don't know by the way, John Carpenter and I looked at Kneale's script and felt it ►



needed work on it to make it acceptable to today's audiences. He didn't like what we had done to it and so asked for his name to be removed from the credits. As John never claimed his credit either it left my name solely as writer on the titles. I do feel a little odd about it because there is a great deal of Kneale in there — Carpenter too — but I'm proud of my work. It isn't that I feel someone else should take the blame because I am certainly more than happy to share the credit whenever anybody asks me about it".

For the second time since the series began co-producer Debra Hill went on record as saying that the new film would not be gory at all, and again for the second time she was proved wrong. "Debra always gets carried away and in this case it was just unfortunate enthusiasm on her part in an effort to try and draw a line between the first two films. She almost seems to beg the question. The film has its fair share of gore but my treatment of it is far from voyeuristic as I put affection and humour behind it with certain elements of satire. There is one scene that always upsets people and seems to leave the greatest impression. It is where a woman gets an electric drill put in her ear. If you look carefully at the scene there is absolutely nothing to it but as the idea is so hard to take, people

think they see more than they actually do. *Halloween III* is definitely different in approach and tone in comparison with the first two. I didn't like *Halloween II* at all. I'm proud of my work on *Halloween* but the sequel did nothing for me at all and seemed to be the complete antithesis of the first one — violence for violence sake. Hopefully my film escapes that curse even though at the time of its initial American release it was sold short by many critics who just blanketed it as another in the long line of gore movies".

Wallace thinks of *Halloween III: Season of the Witch* as a pod movie. "Yes, that's right. I categorise horror movies in one of two ways: knife movies and pod movies. The first two *Halloween* movies are obviously knife movies but *Halloween III* is something else again. Everybody has seen *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* and I feel the film has a lot in common with that — a plot against earth people and somebody who has to do something about it no matter how enormous the odds. *Halloween III* is far more insidious than that even, with a much more arch plot. I think that was the division Debra Hill was trying to make between the films when she made that statement about gore".

One thing Tommy Lee Wallace isn't certain about is if the film had just been

released as *Season of the Witch*, how would that have affected its box-office? "I honestly can't answer that. It may have found its own audience in time as I think there was a definite amount of backlash from the audience who wanted to see the more traditional aspects of the series i.e. Jamie Lee Curtis and The Shape, and were disappointed. Some of the blame there has to be laid at Universal's feet because we told them from the start that they would have to attend to this in their advertising. But they played it safe as they knew they would get their money back in the first weekend of U.S. release if they treated it like the previous film. They wanted to cash in on the title and I had to be beholden to that because it is what provided the money in the first place. It did do 18 million dollars worth of business which is very respectable and a very important lever for my next venture, so it seems everybody didn't come just to see a slashing knife and go away disappointed. It really is anybody's guess if fewer or more people would have seen the film without the *Halloween* prefix".

So is there still life in the series as a going concern? "I honestly don't care. I think that was another reason why I didn't want to be involved with *Halloween II*. I wanted it left at *Halloween* but



by the time *Halloween III* had come around a lot had happened and I was prepared to give it a whirl especially as it could prove to be something different. There are two sides to the argument. If the same material is to be constantly rehashed, then no, I think it is time to quit. But of course the people behind the studio desks will be prepared to back an idea as long as there is money in it. There is talk of *Halloween IV* but I'm not interested and neither do John and Debra want to be closely involved. On the other hand there are a great amount of stories that could still be told about the Halloween phenomenon because we really only have scratched the surface. You could have *Halloween XX* feasibly and still be coming up with a scary story as long as the series worked along the guidelines set down by *The Twilight Zone* or *Night Gallery* and weren't confined to the same characters.

Wallace thinks the series would have had a greater longevity if the films had been spread over more years like the *Star Wars* saga. "That would have been far more intelligent but everybody was trying to push the sequels through to make the tight release deadline. I said at the time, suppose we take real care and get together a good script and actually shoot it in New England when the actual

Halloween season is upon us so we could really get a proper sense and flavour of that precise time of year. But no one had the patience or interest to approach it like that — certainly no one behind the money. The essence of the theme would have really benefitted by being shot in season but as yet that movie hasn't been made. The cycle being what it is meant that none of the films have ever pinned it down. *Halloween* did pretty well in off-season while we were running around throwing leaves into the camera and framing the shots in order to block out any palm trees. Had we gone back east, the incredible mood we would have got would have been well worth the effort. In reality the time of the year has still yet to be properly represented".

Would he have picked a horror subject as his directorial debut had he really had the choice? "Probably not. It would have been more likely a comedy or a rock'n'roll film which is the direction I'm leaning in at the moment. I have just done a deal with Lorimar to direct a comedy about the night in the life of a crazy motel called, strangely enough, *Motel*. I suppose you could say it is in the *Airplane* tradition. Also a company called Zupnick Curtis have agreed in principle to a science fiction movie the working title of which is *Skins* but that is going to have

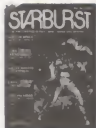
to be changed as everybody thinks it's a soft-core porno film. It isn't — it's a sort of western set in Palm Springs with a man in a white hat aspect to it — except in this case the hat is a space helmet. Enough — I shouldn't really have said that much. I do have a dream project that I am hoping the Public Broadcasting System of America will help me realise as a television mini-series and that is Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*. I could retire quite happily from the movie industry once I've done that".

I was relying on Tommy Lee Wallace's evident warmth and honesty to pull me through asking my next question. Would he be where he is today if it hadn't been for John Carpenter? "That's hard to say. John helped me a lot in the beginning but after that I think I have earned my way with my proven abilities. John gave me my first job on *Dark Star* but after that I think he employed me because I was capable and we have a good rapport rather than the fact that I was just his friend. We have recently finished writing *The Ninja* together and it was a blast because although you have to be more considerate than usual in working with a friend, the pay off can be immense. When you have a friend and you communicate together so well, there really isn't any reason to stop. Is there?"



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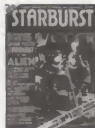
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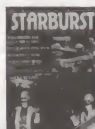
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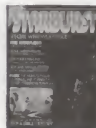
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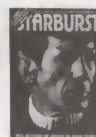
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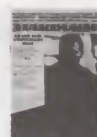
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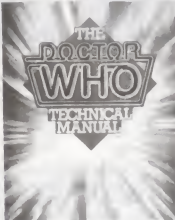
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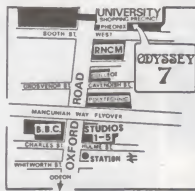
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STAR WARS RETURN OF THE JEDI

"It's Never-Neverland! It's Oz! It's a galaxy far, far away... a great place to go and live out the fantasies you can't get in a nine-to-five world." — Mark Hamill.



With all the blather about a Steven (who hates to be called Steve) over the last Starburstan year, not to mention our most recent issues, I could almost be accused of forgetting that there happens to be another film-maker *extraordinaire* (and multi-millionaire) around who has become rather better known as Lucasfilm than plain Lucas.

But, by George, he's back.

And how...

The Third Coming is upon us. *The Return of the Jedi* (vengeful spirits, no more) has finally dawned on an eagerly expectant world.

Few among us are overly worried about its box-office outcome. That, surely, is a foregone, mega-hit encore conclusion. Sly Stallone, among others, has proved that if I can be better than I, then I can be bigger, brighter and better still.

And *Jedi* is *Star Wars III* to most mere mortals, even though we know quite well that it is really *No VI* in George Lucas' nine-segment super-galactic serial. The End, in fact, just six years after *The Star*, of the third act of the Rebel Alliance vs. The Empire battles. The conclusion of the middle segment of a Lucasian dream that's not half-way told yet.

Who better to (try to) quiz about the new tale being told than the one member of the team who is almost more in love with the series—if that's possible—than its creator or his mammoth worldwide audience. Mark Hamill, that is—a fan of *Starburst* every bit as much as *Starbursters* are of his Luke Skywalker.

Even so, he's not giving too much away... Not, you'll notice, one word about Bib Fortune, Admiral Ackbar, Jabba the Hutt's Sail Barge, Jabba himself, or a certain unusual musical trio.

"In *Empire*," says Mark, "Round Two went to Darth Vader. As it were... *Jedi* will still be very enjoyable from the recognition factor, if you understand that the first two films were an elaborate set-up for this one.

"I think people already sense that *Jedi* is the final chapter in the story—and not a cliffhanger. It's the big finish! All stops are out and all systems are go. I can't wait..."

He can't wait to see it—and yet he's there in the thick of it, the battles in the towering forests and all. Of course, he hadn't then seen all the final effects... so what is he waiting for, *exactly*?

"I think it's going to be magnificent! It's going to be everything that George would have like to have done in *Star Wars*. But we weren't ready for it. We had to build to finally arrive at *Return of the Jedi*."

Build is right...

I'm sure the Lucasfilm statistician division could boggle the pedestrian mind with their figures. So many tons of styrofoam and plaster, wood and make-up. X-miles of electrical wiring and tubing, not to mention cloth—there's 4,000 yards of red stuff for the sails of the Sail Barge alone. Tons more lumber and nails. Thousand upon thousand



manhours for a year's effects' work, including intricate miniatures and opticals. A construction crew of hundreds (500 in all). An overall production team of more than a thousand technicians. Even 25 gardeners...

Par for an epic's course, of course!

Bib Who... Admiral Whatwuz... and a musical trio...?

Wait. Wait! We're getting there...

But let us begin – at the beginning.

Shooting *Jedi* followed the now time-honoured tradition as the others in the world's most successful movie series. Live action at Elstree studios, plus certain locations (hello America – farewell, Tunisia) and then about a full year's effects work at ILM in Marin County.

Nothing to it, really!

Richard Marquand, the first British (all right then, Welsh) director chosen for the series first called "Action!" on Monday, January 11, 1982... when everyone was still talking about *Raiders*, looking forward maybe to new Oscars (five of the *Jedi* crew picked up *Raiders'* Oscars) and not much at all had been heard about a little film called *E.T. And Me* except that in Hollywood (and Spielbergian) executives' opinions, *Pottergeist* would prove to be the summer's biggie.



THE STUDIO

Once again, all nine sound stages at the *Star Wars* earth home base of EMI's Elstree studios – Lucasfilm East! – were taken over and filled to capacity. That meant Stage Six, as well; (aka, the £600,000 *Star Wars* stage, although it was first built for *The Empire Strikes Back* in 1978) and that one super soundstage alone, one of the most gaudy in Europe, has a capacity of close to one million and a half cubic feet. Bit big for a party. Then again, no one throws parties like Lucas.

Hardly a cubic inch of Stage Six was wasted, from floor to rafters, as it became successfully crammed, three times over inside three months, with varying sets of eye-popping scope and scale. It housed the monumental exterior gate to Jabba the Hutt's Tatooine desert palace for example. Once Tatooine was finished and done with (in Britain), in came the gigantic Imperial Death Star Docking Bay.

Yes, you heard. I did say: Death Star.

And there we all were thinking we'd seen the last of that going up in X-Wing smithereens in the first film. Think again. Remember "build" is the operative word at Lucasfilm. Darth Vader simply ordered a new one built. Only more so. The new model is an armoured space station many, many, many times more deadly than the dread Death Star of six years back.

Using the Docking Bay is one of the film's new vehicles. This is the Imperial Shuttle. No model this one. No miniaturised concept of some future space travel form. It's damn nearly the real thing. Certainly, it's constructed to quite staggering full-scale size. The undercarriage alone weighs in at five tons.

The Shuttle is not alone (of course not) in the life-size armaments. Out of the Elstree mothballs came Luke's trusty X-Wing Fighter, ready, willing and all gassed up for the final encounter. Plus Han Solo's Millennium Falcon ship... yes, yes, of course, he comes out of his deep carbon-freeze mothballs, too. (We're getting there, I tell you).

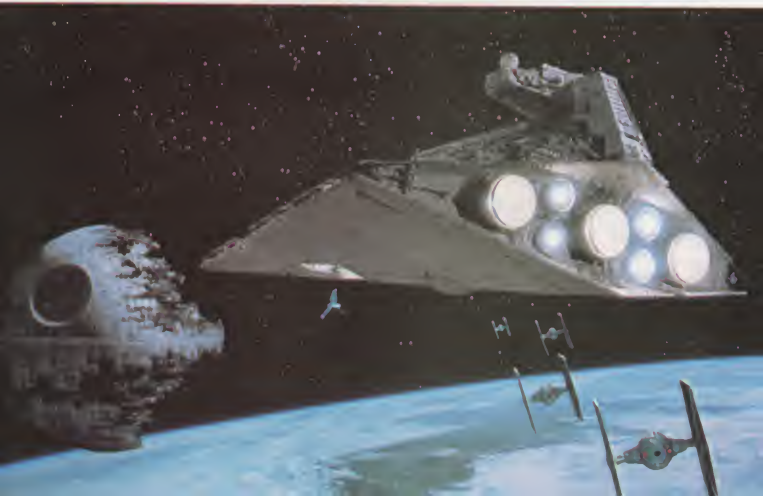
Over on Stage Four was the Emperor's Throne Room with its own elevator system at one end, a middle platform, and the throne, itself, all atop a set of majestic steps and large window surrounds. On Stage Five, the rebels were meeting in their Main Briefing Room, a dominating, circular chamber auditorium, with a captain's bridge spanning one end.

Then, as the scene sifting went on and on, the wonderful tree-top village began to be perched high above a redwood forest – necessitating a full 360-degree cyclorama surround. The village square was built some 20 ft off the ground and looked, well, a bit naïf to the visitor's eye. Ah, but once the dry ice and other mist buttons were pressed, the magic took over and the whole structure appeared to be floating a hundred feet above a forest... a redwood forest that is of styrofoam and plaster, not that you'd ever know it.

Brilliant though it was, the forest too soon shed its day. Out it went and in moved the Imperial Landing Platform...

Oh yes, a lot of building going on... and long before the January 11 start date. Each new wondrous set appeared to dwarf the previous one, only to be dwarfed in turn by another super-superstructure from the team led by production designer Norman Reynolds – a double Oscar-winner for *Star Wars* and *Raiders*. Eighteen months work led to these sets, drawn first by the series' conceptual artist Ralph McQuarrie (there should be an Oscar category for his kind of toil), turned into storyboards by artist Joe Johnston (or, visualizer, as





THE MONSTERS

'Star Wars had a reasonable quota of monsters. *Empire* less so,' says Robert Watts. George Lucas's British right-hand man. 'Jedi is the monster movie!'

There are those fans who still talk – for hours – about the cantina scene in *Star Wars*. The Greedo groupies! They and they alone were somewhat disappointed with the lack of – shall we say – new faces? – in the second film. Well, all good things come to those who wait. *Jedi* makes up for everything.

So, will you welcome please Admiral Ackbar, a reptilian-looking old devil... Bib Fortuna, the semi-human and huuuge-headed majordomo of Jabba the Hut. Ole Jabba, himself, but of course. The one and the only Rancor ever seen on any moving picture screen. And we must not forget the swine-like (as in pig-like) Gamorrean guards, must we?

These are just some of the bizarre denizens of the Lucas/Kasdan *Jedi* script. Bib Fortuna presides over most of them inside his master's throne room. They are, in effect, Jabba's entourage. Quite the '83 rage, that's for sure.

They are the result of two monster workshops, on both sides of the film-making pond. When Howard Kazanjian first signed on as the *Jedi* producer way back in 1981, when the firm was still known as *Revenge of the Jedi*, he asked Phil Tippet to set up a workshop of L.M. and start, well, creating or 'conceptualising' some new monsters. Phil, baby! Phil did not have to be asked twice.

He supervised the construction of the new feature creatures over there, while Stuart Freeborn – veteran of the cantina scene, itself – supervised the make-up, design and additional creature construction at elstree, where most of the monster footage was eventually filmed under Richard Marquand's knowing Celtic eye. Once Phil Tippet has completed his work in Marin County, he flew his monsters to London.

'They are terribly difficult', comments Robert Watts, 'because you are breaking new ground each time on each new creature. You never know when they're going to be ready – and if they're ready, are they going to work?'

Most everybody seems to have had a hand – a pencil, at least – in designing the *Jedi* monster brigade. Certainly, many were derived from George Lucas' own, apparently, limitless imagination. (Based on certain un-named Hollywood tycoons, perhaps?) Richard Marquand threw in a few healthy guidelines of his own. Ralph McQuarrie and Joe Johnston sketched some others. Phil Tippet had his own notions and Stuart Freeborn added various of his – but always in the wee small hours.

'I don't really come up with anything in the daytime,' laughs Stuart. 'It's only at night, after I've had about half-an-hour's sleep that "I suddenly wake up and be absolutely full of ideas! It becomes a very strong vision, I dash out of bed and write it down as fast as I can. Little notes on how to make things operate – the mechanics.'

In all, though, there's about ten different steps in the birth of a single representative of any new Lucasian world – and that's not counting rejection or acceptance. Phil Tippet ticks some of them off his general list: Design. Sculpture. Mould-making. Rubber-running. Trimming. Painting.

'And then the final tweaking in order to get them exactly [but never Earthy] and looking right.'

Many were called, but few were chosen – particularly once the news, and the first photographs of E.T. were being passed around. *Jedi* had more than simply the cantina set to beat, or at least match.

From his Monster Shop in California, Tippet was forever in touch with the main Elstree unit. He checked up on what Richard Marquand and Robert Watts were expecting from him. He chatted to production designer Norman Reynolds about the specifications of the sets, like the Throne Room – no use, of course, in designing some splendid new creature at the wrong size for the completed set. And then it would be back on the phone to Marquand about the characterisations he might have planned for certain creatures.

Most taxing of all was engineering ways for the monsters to actually perform. Tippet and Freeborn settled for three basic methods. 'Sometimes an actor can fit inside a creature costume,' explains Phil. 'That actor is often supplemented by a cable running into the costume, winding its way up the actor's back, then running via the mask, to the face and eyes. The cable grips are operated by hand by someone else off-camera and the grips are synchronised in order to make the face move and eyes blink.'

'We also used air-bladders and tubes that are attached to bellows so that, when an off-camera operator pressed a bladder, the lips or cheeks on a creature will pout out a bit









Lucasfilm phrases it) and then made to work by the trusty firm of Norman Reynolds & Co., builders to Emperors like George Lucas and Steven Spielberg.

Lucas pal, Howard Kazanjian (another U.S.C. graduate), was the detail-oriented strategist promoted from exec producing *Raiders* to producing *Jedi*. To dovetail the efforts of Elstree and the Marin County special effects in Northern California, he had Robert Watts and Jim Bloom as co-producers, on the British and American sides of the pond, respectively. Above all, of course, like the Spielberg experience on *Raiders*, Howard has the considerable advantage of a well-oiled, tried and tested Lucasfilm machine. More *Raiders*' Oscar winners, Michael Ford, Richard Edlund and Kit West, for example, were taking care of set dressing and the visual effects. Ben Burtt was editing sound effects. Two newcomers to this, by now, veteran crowd were editor Sean Barton and cinematographer Alan Hume.

But you might, at this juncture, be rather more interested in the actors. Well, all the old faithful faces are back in place—on the Elstree and location sets while the new faces (Admiral Whosis...?) were being dreamt up on and being made, slowly, to work in what soon became known as Phil Tippett's Monster Shop at ILM. (Oh, so the admiral is a... Wait 'n' see).

THE CAST

This time around it's the Ensemble Strikes Back... The old firm of Mark Hamill, Harrison Ford and Carrie Fisher star again. Obviously. (And, if you have tears, prepare to shed 'em now: they're all starring for the last time). Mark and Carrie are into snazzy new costuming, for once, as Luke 'n' Leia. He's a full-blown rebel Commander, these days, and wears full Jedi gear, black and nifty. She's in, at times, a cute and nicely more revealing metal bikini affair. Looks as if it could be a bit scratchy in the clinches. Still, it's about time we saw more of Ms. Fisher. She's finally a Fantasy Female. Only took six years! While the rebels plot climactic moves against Darth Vader's evil Imperialists—by bringing all the rebel warship fleet together in one single, stunning armada—Luke and Leia nip off to Tatooine to rescue Han Solo from the clutches of the vile, underhand thug known as Jabba the Hut.



Anthony Daniels and 3ft 2in Kenny Baker re-enter their metallic looking suits for C-3PO and R2-D2, supreme in the knowledge that they and they alone will survive to appear in all nine *Star Wars* tales.

David Prowse, assisted for once by stuntman Bob Anderson, is behind Darth Vader's heavy breathing mask—the heavy breaths coming, as per usual, by James Earl Jones. Peter Mayhew, tallest chap in the movies at 7ft 2in, remains Chewbacca. Sir Alec Guinness returns to the fold which made him the richest knight in the acting business, for another Obi-Wan came in the odd and vital scenes. And who else but Frank Oz would be operating the 26in tall and 900-year-old Chaucerian Yoda, for the scenes with Luke inside the tiny Jedi Master's tinier hut which Richard Marquand said was like directing from under a desk for two days.

And yes, in case I forgot to mention it in my rush to get to Admiral What's his name, Billy Dee is also back on duty as Lando Calrissian, Han Solo's buddy.

"I wasn't going to pass up the opportunity to play Lando Calrissian," says Williams. "I fell in love with the name! If you're an actor—the kind of actor I am—you like to have fun. I want to do everything I can conceivably do before I'm dead. I'm in these films, the comic books, the radio series, it's Toy City! I'm living out all my fantasies.

"I'm like Lando. He's always in transition. He has to be—that's where the fun is. Lando's a rogue, a scoundrel. An adventurer! He has a business going on in Cloud City and he's at that point in his life where he's calmed down a bit. He's not running around being crazy like his friend Han Solo.

"Then, all of a sudden, Darth Vader shows up. Lando finally turns around, and becomes a good guy—because he always was a good guy. He's a bit of a chameleon but that's all part of survival."

And then, as if speaking for the entire cast, Billy Dee Williams added, "How do you not do a *Star Wars*?"

THE LOCATIONS

After the dozen weeks—78 days if you're fussy—of Elstree highs, Richard Marquand's unit moved on to the first ever American locations for the series. And eight more weeks work in hot, very hot Arizona and the cooler coastal redwood forests of North California.

A place called Buttercup Valley (who's kidding?) became the new Tatooine, instead of its original home in the Tunisian desert. Well, Tunisia is so full of film units these days, ever since *Star Wars* put it and local producer Tarak Ben Ammar on the map. (One of his recent films made there is *Misunderstood* starring Gene Hackman and E.T.'s Elliott, Henry Thomas). I doubt if many of the Lucasfilm regular crew members noticed the difference—the temperature hit 120 degrees in Buttercup Valley, which happens to be situated in well known Western movie country in Arizona, near the California border on the Colorado River.

Lucas, Kazanjian and Marquand settled their sights on the Valley to fulfill their need (with six month's tidying up work) for a vista of sand dunes stretching for as far as the eye, or at



least Alan Hume's camera lens, could see.

In the tourist brochures, Yuma and its buttercuppiness (a 300 year old town with 300 days of sun a year for its 75,000 tanned inhabitants) is billed as Arizona's Best Kept Secret. That's hardly true. Even before Lucasfilm East hit West, Buttercup Valley and its proud (and massive) Competition Hill feature, is well known to any American owning a dune buggy. It is, in fact, the dune buggy capital of the world; American, at least. It's packed with up to 15,000 buggysts come the holiday weekends.

It took, as I say, about six months to clear the valley of all vegetation to make it suit Lucas needs. Norman Reynolds, who had a million dollars to spend there, also had to construct a four acre stockade housing one of Jedi's major secrets—a 30,000 sq. ft. platform, on top of which is a 60ft, fully rigged (remember those 4,000 yards of sail cloth? Sail barge. This is Jabba the Hutt's anti-gravity vehicle-cum-boat-cum-watchmacallit, skimming across the desert sands dunes with ILM power.

It sounds easy, again. Here's a million bucks, Norm, just go out to Yuma and do your thing, right?

But it included such headaches as having to use a total of two million gallons of water (from the All American canal) to damp down and gradiate the only possible access road to the locale site—not to mention the purchase of 16,000 pounds of nails to keep the massive barge affair steady. Not easy once sandstorms started striking the 125-strong unit at some 60mph.

A day lost on the tight Jedi schedules would cost \$100,000 in "standing still" money. "We allow for almost no contingency at all, maybe one percent," commented Howard Kazanjian with a certain irony. (When he could be heard during the furious storms, that was). "We figure every day will be... perfect. It's my responsibility that this wind is blowing today. It's been blowing for thousands of years. But today—it's my fault!"

Who'd be a producer!

With the heat and storms of Buttercup time behind them, the Jedi unit then moved on to its final live-action port of call. The small fishing and lumber town of Crescent City, in Northern California, about 250 miles off from the Lucasfilm headquarters in Marin County. (Steven Spielberg also finished up his E.T. schedule there on the borderline of the Golden State and Oregon's Beaver State).

Lucas wasn't after the town. He wanted to use to natural marvels of the Sequoia Sempervirens—the coast redwood tree forests The Redwood, a lightweight, straight grained, knot-free, insect and fungi-resistant tree makes the trusty British oak look a trifle sickly by comparison. Redwoods grow taller than ten-storey buildings and at a hell of a lick—fortrees—up to 200ft a century. Most of them in the movie are older even than Yoda, never mind Hollywood—at more than 22,000 years old! So you can work out their size. Tall!

They are, as you can imagine, something of a much prized and overly protected species. Their main enemy—fire. As the Jedi script (by George and Empire's find, Larry Kasdan, by the way), called for a spate of skirmishes with laser bolts and the like flying in all directions as Vader's forces take on the Rebel Alliance, it proved impossible to get permission to shoot among the forests of the State or National parks. The special effects explosives on hand for the battles would have fired every Redwood around from Crescent City to Marin County.

A detailed racee by chopper, four-wheel drive and, ultimately, on foot, located a private lumber company with trees to spare in four sites for the battle setpieces... once a squad of gardeners cleared the aged undergrowth and more constructions crews widened and cleared new roads to the locations—as remote as most location sites always prove to be. For five hectic weeks the Redwood withstood a barrage of laser and explosive blasts until Richard Marquand's assistant director David Tomblin, heading up the remaining second-unit finally called "Cut!" after the last shot at 4pm on May 28, 1983... a good seven seconds ahead of schedule."

THE EFFECTS

And so, the final trek south to the Lucasfilm home. The first weeks of effects photography—opticals—retained the main actors on call for the always tricky blue screen scenes. Hamill, Ford, Carrie, Williams and the rest now did their acting against a large, blue-toned screen, modulating their actions and reactions as if they were back in the thick of it on location. It was real fantasy time—acting against backgrounds which had been filmed separately and would only be married together later.



Richard Marquand worked out each desired action and then coached his players, as in the old silent days of Hollywood. "Now you're coming near a tree... Now, you bank to the right... and now you come around the tree... and oh, what a relief!"

A relief for Marquand, perhaps. A sad farewell for the trio of skywalkers. In a fast moving week, they filmed their final shots of the series. Luke Skywalker should be back in the *Star Wars* episode III (the real III). But as a child, only. And not even make-up will be able to disguise Mark Hamill to play him then... in, maybe, 1989. Mark would then be 37!

The stars left; Harrison Ford shedding less euphemistic tears than Mark or Carrie. But then he has his Indiana Jones saga to continue, and much else besides. Ford, alone of the three, has become a superstar since 1977.

The filming was far from over, though. Most if not all films need some kind of effects work, or simple post-production photography, even if it's only close-ups of hands opening doors, drawers, etc. This can take a day, a week or two, sometimes a month or three. *Jedi* was based at Industrial Light and Magic for a full year—increasing the total of effect shots, and indeed effects capabilities over and above the great strides made in *Star Wars* and surpassed in *Empire*. We'll get, I'm sure, to discuss many of these in future issues—how they did it always reads better after you've seen what they've done.

THE BOSS

George Lucas never seems to put a foot wrong in terms of storyline or gathering about him the best possible crews in both California and Eire. He explains now that he chose to begin his *Luke Skywalker Adventures* with the now-concluded middle trilogy because he felt closer to that particular part of the on-going story in 1977. He chose his next director, Irvin Kershner, and now Marquand, because he had the utmost faith in their treatment of his vision—and then allows them their head.

Richard Marquand explains that his goal with *Jedi* was to create "real relationships and real action that stem from real emotions," without falling into the trap of sinking slowly into the morass of the most highly-praised effects work in Hollywood history. His acting background served him well in his aims. "I'm an actor's director, rather than a shots man," says Marquand. "And having George Lucas as an executive producer is like directing *King Lear* with Shakespeare in the next room!"

Unlike most producers in Hollywood—well, in Marin County—George remains unique in putting his money where his (from from big) mouth is. Lucasfilm alone finances both *Empire* and *Jedi*—a combined total of \$57.5 million; about the cost of one *Superman*.

"I decided," says His Georgeship, "I had the most faith in my own films. I'm using my profits to make more films." And he has a credo for those films, whether featuring Luke Skywalker or Indiana Jones. It's one that a lot of other film-makers seem to have forgotten. "One of the most important things is to create an emotion in the audience. The movie can be funny, sad or scary, but there has to be an emotion. It has to make you feel good or laugh or jump out of your seat."

With *Jedi* out in the cinemas, and almost bound to be the most successful movie of 1983—sorry about that, *Supie*—the Lucas battle really begins.

Having disposed of his central trilogy, George has to gamble on going back to the beginning, to the real *Star Wars* I, II and III. Starting all over, with Artoo and Threepio apart, new characters... before, of course, come the Nineties, going on into VII, VIII and IX, which cover the rebuilding of the Republic.

He has to generate a new magical source for the continuous work. He has the storylines down on paper. As before, he will carefully select his new scriptwriters and directors (Spielberg still wants to helm one) to ensure the series never gets stale. And he still says he aims to direct the last one which won't be coming this way until beyond 1995. Is there anyone really doubting that he can bring it off?

Not me.
George, mate—thanks a bunch. And may the source go with you.

Next Month: Starburst presents its review of Return of the Jedi. Issue 60 — on sale 7th July.

THE SAGA CONTINUES



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NIGEL KNEALE ON HALLOWEEN





Starburst: When did you first hear about *Halloween III*?

Kneale: It happened accidentally. John Landis called me from America and asked if I would be interested in helping to write the screenplay for a remake of *The Creature from the Black Lagoon*. I had never seen the original, which was perhaps just as well. My wife and I travelled to Hollywood and camped out at the Sheraton Hotel. Each day I would pop along to the studio and have meetings with Landis and others. One of whom was Jack Arnold, a very nice man indeed. The most exciting thing about these people is their fantastic knowledge of the medium. They had read everything that I've written and they were aware of the minutest detail relating to my work, even down to the names of the supporting players.

I finally had the opportunity to see the original film. It's not a very well written story. There you had a situation where someone makes a dramatic discovery, but instead of following it up, goes back to the

first principle and says, "Oh, I think there could be the possibility that such and such a thing exists," having just had clear evidence that it does.

Did you plan to base it on the first film?

No, we wanted to do a completely different story this time. I worked out a rough screenplay and we were told we could shoot in the spring. I was pleased with the script, there was a lot of humour and the characters were bang up to date. Then came the problem, the horrendous cost of the special effects and costumes, etc. This created a great wrangle over the budget and then *Jaws 3D* appeared on the horizon as a rival project. Although our budget was to have been considerably less than 20 million dollars, it was temporarily shelved.

How did this lead you onto *Halloween III*?

I met Joe Dante. He was between projects and was preparing to shoot a third *Halloween* picture, although he wanted it to be totally different to the first two. I hadn't seen the first film but knew enough about

them to be put off the idea unless it was a brand new story. Dante suggested that I wrote a treatment around the word *Halloween*. As I come from the Isle of Man and I remembered that *Halloween* was a big event, the start of the Celtic year and so forth, I worked out a story about the shops filling up with plastic masks and *Halloween* toys as it's really a big industry in America. I said we could do a story about a joke factory so that the background would be basically comic. Into this you inject something creepy, magical, frightening. The theme was to be microchip witchcraft. In the old days in order for a witch to put a curse on you she had to make personal contact. With the advent of the micro-chip, a spell could be transferred through the *Halloween* gifts. The trademark stamp would carry the device and would spread whatever evil influences it was designed to spread via a trigger mechanism incorporated in a tv programme.

John Carpenter liked the idea and said, ►





let's do it. We attempted it very quickly in order to cash in on Halloween. It meant I had to produce a one and a half hour script in six weeks. Tommy Wallace was going to direct it and we had quite a few conferences with an aim to making it more realistic. Well away from *Halloween II* and well away from the tearing off of heads. It was to have some horrifying moments of course, but it just wasn't horror for horror's sake. The main story had to do with deception, psychological shocks rather than physical ones.

What went wrong when you had to complete the script?

Dino De Laurentiis appeared on the scene and I was told that evidently a lot of my dialogue didn't translate well into Italian. He was having difficulty understanding it. He finally decided that it should follow a pattern set by *Halloween II*. There was nothing in my baby that I could recognise and poor old Tommy Wallace was given the task of re-writing it. It was reduced to cardboard sets and a cast of six. So I took my name off of it, even though they tried to persuade me otherwise. Suddenly you had a story of someone stealing a five ton stone from Stonehenge, grinding it up and producing micro-chips.

What was Tommy Wallace's reaction to rewriting the script?

Well there was nothing he could do, he was driven to it. I think he will probably be a great director. He's a very intelligent man with a strong feeling for character and storyline, some of which will appear in *Halloween III*.

Did you argue with the studio over keeping your original script?

Yes, I said to them, don't you want some kind of suspense at the beginning. A zero point from which to build. 'Oh no', they said. 'You must start in tearing heads off. We've got to keep faith with the kids.' What they actually mean is how important it is to extract all the money out of the campus kids within the space of two weeks. Any story that attempts to explain something or set up characters isn't going to interest them. I asked them 'what about *Psycho*? There's a prime example of what I mean.'

'You couldn't sell *Psycho* to the kids,' they told me.

I think that's untrue, but that seems to be their attitude. All they're worried about is money.

*Is it then this very kind of exploitation movie that put you off the original *Halloween*, which in fact showed little gore?*

The first movie lost credibility by having an indestructible monster. It turned into a Frankenstein picture, but hadn't set out to be one. *Halloween* had the atmosphere and



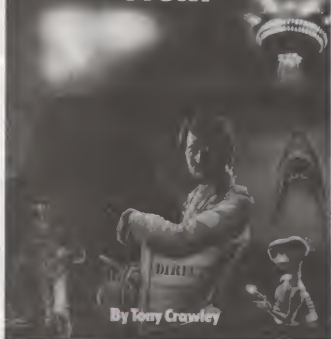


the right sort of music. But there were no skilled performances, apart from Donald Pleasance who wasn't allowed to give one. They should have given him something to do, not a lot of meaningless lines and wandering up and down a street falling over bushes and getting nothing done. You just don't do that to an actor, out of respect. Did you originally plan a lot of special effects for the story, apart from the producers request for more blood? No, not really. I remember back in the early days of television, someone would have to go home and try to think up a solution which looks superb on screen for the minimum amount of money. Hollywood goes off and spends a million dollars. Nowadays, even in tv you have all these outfits doing commercials, who are used to charging vast sums of money which they know will somehow be passed on and nobody will notice, and of course their terribly good at making an apple fall in half or something like that. But when it comes to storytelling they don't know where to start, its just technique. Special effects is now a growth industry.

Any chance of Halloween IV?
I don't think so, I still haven't fully recovered from the first trip. I did have an idea about ghosts, but it was unfortunately too similar to *Poltergeist* for me to try it ●



THE STEVEN SPIELBERG STORY



By Tony Crawley

NEXT ISSUE. . .

We'll be giving away 50 (that's right, **FIFTY**) copies of Tony Crawley's new book **The Steven Spielberg Story**, a revised and expanded version of this comprehensive three-part feature which appeared in **Starburst** several issues back.

Naturally, issue 60 of **Starburst** will feature more on **Return of the Jedi**, plus an interview with **Superman III** director Richard Lester, coverage of the Dan O'Bannon scripted **Blue Thunder** and lots more besides.

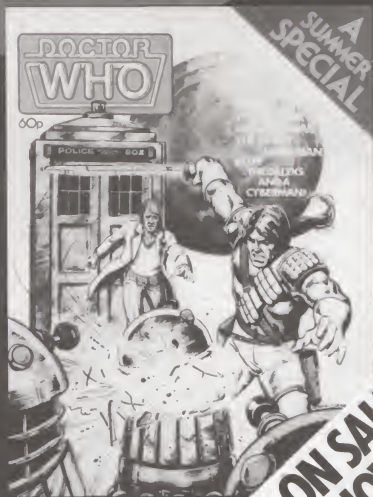
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Review by Alan Jones

From the same team who brought you *Comin' At Ya* comes this very pale imitation of *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, again shot in Spain and in a 3-D process originally called Supervision but changed to Wondervision probably due to some impending law suit.

You're left in no doubt as soon as the film opens that this is familiar territory, as a modern day Indiana Jones (some hope) called J.T. Striker (Tony Anthony) breaks into a ruined castle in search of a jewelled key concealed in a tomb in the dungeons. He is assaulted from all sides by snakes, vultures, hidden spikes, flaming spears, dogs and rolling balls of fire, the latter a good example of just how desperately the film-makers try to allude to the Spielberg classic. With the key in Striker's clutches, the film abruptly screeches to a halt as the plot is dragged up from the depths to make a sudden appearance. It transpires that the key opens a secret compartment in each of four priceless crowns which date back for centuries to some ancient power. One has

been destroyed, one is in safe keeping at a museum and two are the property of the manic leader of a mysterious Moonie type cult called Jonas, who uses them as a shrine to control his misled disciples. When the crown in the museum is unlocked it affirms that the legend surrounding them and their occult power is indeed true. So Striker is coerced into retrieving the two remaining crowns from Jonas' fortress, the City of Unity and Love. Putting together a motley team containing a hopeless drunk, an over-the-hill circus strongman, his trapeze artist daughter and a technological wizard, Striker sets off to infiltrate the seemingly impenetrable inner sanctum guarding the crowns. The finale is yet another 3-D free-for-all as the occult powers of the crowns get unleashed on all and sundry and once again we are bludgeoned into submission by the non-stop mediocrity of it all.

Comin' At Ya was no masterpiece, I'll grant you, but at least it was stylishly made with a modicum of storyline. *Treasure of the Four Crowns* on the other hand is an empty, charmless exercise that never focuses on its plot, only on the peripheral action that shows off the

rudimentary 3-D process to best advantage. The dialogue is deathless, and while there is a certain amount of fascination in the execution of the break-in to the crown's ante-chamber — something akin to that of *Rififi* and *Topkapi* — the film never shakes off its sole purpose of existence, which is to dangle or throw whatever it can contrive to incorporate into the script at you relentlessly. Whether it be an oozing sore or a laser beam, everything but the kitchen sink is launched into the audience. Actually that isn't quite correct — there is a kitchen sink. One of its taps breaks away and spurts a stream of water in your face! This all gets very tedious and boring after a while and that's a shame because surely 3-D has much more potential than solely being an exploitation gimmick?

Director Ferdinando Baldi (alias Tony Anthony) even tacks on a ludicrous and meaningless ending that has nothing whatsoever to do with what has gone before, just to supply one last jolt. He needn't have bothered. I decided early on not to let him get too close because he definitely has a personal problem and one that seems to be common to other recent 3-D film-makers too. Bad breath! ●



MAUSOLEUM

Added Michael Dugan to the long list of veteran film-makers who have directed low-budget horror movies. Dugan spent years as a Hollywood cameraman, counting *Jaws*, *The Poseidon Adventure* and *Ben Hur* among his credits. *Mausoleum* is his twelfth picture as director. We hope he has more success with the horror genre than John Huston did with *Phobia* and Ken Hughes did with the excruciating *Terror Eyes*.

It's difficult to tell from the story synopsis and the excellent colour pictures which arrived in the post from Bill George, publicity agent for the movie, but we're hoping it's going to be a better-than-average entry in the genre.

The tale concerns an ancient family curse. Seems that for years the Walker family have been the reluctant recipients of a spate of demonic possessions. The demon moves in on the eldest daughter at the tender age of ten, then keeps a low profile for the next twenty years. Then... all hell breaks loose.

Susan Walker (played by Bobby Breese, see portrait on this issue's back cover) seems a healthy enough young wife, married to Oliver Farrell (Marjoe Gortner). But soon after her thirtieth birthday odd things begin to happen. Susan's aunt disappears in mysterious circumstances. The family gardener is brutally murdered. Finally, as the demon within Susan holds sway, Oliver looks into the face of Hades.

That there is hardly a familiar name in the cast and credits of *Mausoleum* is hardly any criticism. The biographies of the stars and technicians are devoid of familiar movie or tv titles. Bobby Breese has had roles in *The Fall Guy*, *Love Boat*, *BJ and the Bear*, *Police Story* and *Charlie's Angels*. A more revealing portrait of Ms Breese is promised in the August 1983 issue of America's house journal *Playboy*. Sounds promising. Marjoe Gortner is credited in the production notes with having played roles in the *Kojak* pilot, *Viva Knievel*, *Bobby Joe and the Golem*, and *The Food of the Gods*. Interestingly Gortner's role in the Caroline Munro vehicle *Starcrash* went unmentioned, the possible Marjoe doesn't like to be reminded of it. Can't imagine why.

A British release for the film is promised in the spring of 1983. Yet, as we go to press in early April, there is little sign of it on anyone's schedules. Keep watching this space ●





THE HOUSE ON SORORITY ROW

NOTHING CAN PREPARE YOU FOR
WHAT HAPPENS WHEN SHE FIGHTS BACK.



THE HOUSE ON SORORITY ROW

WHERE NOTHING IS OFF LIMITS

What a relief to find a film that, in essence, is just another re-tread of *Friday the 13th*. But for all that strives to maintain a level above all the obvious pitfalls that have plagued other such low budget offerings of late.

The House on Sorority Row is yet another in a long list of cheap thrills, sure enough, but a skillfully made, well paced one that is a promising debut indeed from writer-director Mark Rosman, one time assistant to Brian De Palma.

Originally titled *Seven Sisters*, the story focuses its attention on a group of graduating girls who decide to hold their last end of term party at their sorority house without the blessing of their cretinous old house mother, Mrs Slater (Lois Kelso Hunt). Unknown to them she has a dark hidden secret that goes back to a traumatic birth delivery twenty years ago while under the influence of experimental drugs and the girls unlock this when they decide to pull a last sorority prank on the interfering old woman, which unfortunately results in her death. As the party begins, the girls are still fighting amongst themselves as to whether they should call the police or stash the corpse and it is this underlying unease, well conveyed by cross-cutting the merriment of the party guests with the panic-stricken actions of the girls and the ensuing mayhem, that maintains the interest and gives the film considerable merit.

As retribution catches up with all the girls but one, it is left to actress Kathryn McNeil, as the sister with a conscience, to carry the rest of the film and this she does admirably. One of the nicest plot twists her, which shows how imaginative Mark Rosman is in a sub-genre notorious for its limited innovation, is McNeil having to fight off the unknown assailant while under drug induced hallucinations administered to her by the doctor responsible for Mrs Slater's plight, trying to cover up his past unethical mistakes.

Although a sharp, piked walking stick is the murder implement in *The House on Sorority Row*, the gore quotient is at a very surprising low level. And that goes for the sexual titillation too. Both aspects show remarkable restraint as Rosman is obviously more partial to milking the horror from the situation for all its worth rather than rely on easy shock value. It really doesn't matter that most of the story twist and actions are well telegraphed beforehand — or that the final moments are a bit of a groan-inducer — and stalk-and-slash connoisseur. What does matter however is that Mark Rosman has transcended all this and elevated a common-or-garden tale with well crafted perception and lots of creative energy well served by the fine ensemble playing from the cast.

Mark Rosman's debut is one that should make the major studios sit up and take note. His confident handling of actors and direction of camera should get another outlet soon because on the strength of *The House on Sorority Row*, he deserves it.



I'm going to stun the majority of my regular readers (and I know there are some of you out there; I hear you breathing occasionally) by admitting I quite liked *The Dark Crystal*.

Yes, I thought you'd be amazed, especially since I've already stated in this column that the idea of a movie populated entirely by close relatives of the awful Yoda was enough to make me want to set fire to my stuffed Kermit doll. And when the film came out I was in no rush to see it but eventually the day came when I had nothing better to do but work so I decided to give it a try...

I didn't come out of the cinema thinking I'd seen a masterpiece but I had been pleasantly surprised by the movie. True, as Phil Edwards pointed out in *Starburst 56*, the script is too thin and simplistic but so much imagination has gone into the creatures and the settings that one's eyes are kept occupied despite there not being much nourishment for the brain...

But as impressed as I was by the visuals I couldn't help thinking that there wasn't much to show for 30 million dollars, and I was left asking myself the question: why did they bother? It does seem that Henson, Oz, Kurtz and company went to a lot of unnecessary trouble to make the film using only Muppet techniques when many alternative, and cheaper, methods were available. They may have been sticking to an artistic principle, and good luck to them, but in all honesty I can't say that there would have been any real difference in the finished product if many of the creatures had been created by using human beings in elaborate make-up.

Nor do I think the film would have suffered if some human characters had been included among the Muppets. The Elfings could easily have been portrayed

by a young boy and girl without jarring with the movie's overall style. The Elfings were supposed to be the last of their kind so it wouldn't have mattered if they were different to all the other characters. And, of course, they could have saved some money doing it that way. Thirty million dollars and several years of effort to produce what is nothing more really than a Muppet TV special just strikes me as being a little, well, weird...

I was disappointed by *The Uninvited* which turned up on TV recently. It must be at least 20 years since I last saw it and I remembered it being a really chilling haunted house movie — a cross between *The Haunting* and *The Innocents* — but time, alas, has not been kind to it. There are one or two scary moments — the seance sequence, for example — but on the whole it now seems a very old-fashioned, hokey piece of work. It also struck me as being a very *uncinematic* film — there's far too much talking going on and far too little time spent on the build-up of suspense. *Cosy* is the best way of describing it; there's never any sense of real menace and the easy way Ray Milland is able to exorcise the evil ghost in the end, simply by flinging a candelabrum at it and ordering it to leave, is typical of what's wrong with the film.

I suppose it impressed me 20 years ago because it was rare for any horror movies to turn up on Australian television (or in the cinemas too for that matter) and so it had an impact on me out of all proportion to its horror content. Still, it was good to have the opportunity of reassessing this 'classic' from the early 1940s even if it didn't live up to its reputation.

I had fond memories of *Conquest of Space* too until I caught up with it again some years ago. It too has appeared recently on TV and hasn't improved one bit. It surely must rank as George Pal's worst movie after *Doc Savage* (*Atlantis — the Lost Continent* is bad but at least it's amusing). *Conquest of Space* is an embarrassment on every level, from the script through to the special effects (though the latter look better on TV than they do on the big screen) and most of the acting is pretty lousy as well. My favourite "Most Embarrassing Moment" is the scene where the Japanese astronaut, Imoto (Bensong Fong) makes this bizarre speech about why it's necessary to go to Mars. According to Imoto the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbour because of Japan's lack of steel and good food. The shortage of steel, he says, forced people to live in paper houses and eat with chopsticks, while poor nutrition made them stunted, unhealthy and consequently very envious of the rich, healthy and, it goes without saying, handsome Americans. But if Japan can obtain all its necessary raw materials from Mars the possibility of another war between Japan and America will be removed...

The scriptwriter responsible for this amazing rubbish was someone called James O'Hanlon. Mr O'Hanlon obviously didn't know much about Japan, much less the logistics of space travel. Even if usable iron ore was discovered on Mars the cost of shipping it back to Earth would be enormous, with the result that his Japanese who were apparently so anxious to throw away their chopsticks and eat like Americans, would have to pay about £1,000 for each knife and fork...

As one TV reviewer said of *Conquest of Space*: "There's nothing so dated as yesterday's future..."



Science fiction blockbusters are all the rage these days. The basic formula seems to be to write a long book about a large theme, and this is precisely what Frank Herbert has done in *The White Plague* (Gollancz, £8.95). The story opens with an American molecular biologist, John O'Neill, visiting Ireland with his family. His wife and two young children are abruptly killed when an IRA bomb explodes in a Dublin Street, and O'Neill decides to revenge himself on the world by creating a plague which will devastate humanity.

The plague turns out to be one which kills only women but is carried by men. Its effects spread rapidly, though Herbert does not go in for large-scale descriptions of fatalities but concentrates the story around several characters in different locales whose destinies are interlinked. Foremost of these is O'Neill himself, who returns to Ireland in disguise and is picked up by men who immediately suspect him of being the man responsible for the plague. In the company of a priest, a mute boy and a sinister activist, O'Neill undertakes a pilgrimage across Ireland where he witnesses first-hand the effects of his plague. By now his O'Neill persona has become submerged in his alter-ego and he is effectively schizophrenic. The eventual climax of the novel is a satisfying blend of optimism and grim realism.

It's clear that Herbert has put a lot of effort into the research and writing of this novel. I was particularly impressed by the way he has captured Irish speech patterns, and there are also some interesting discussions of the Irish consciousness, their attitude towards the British, and so on. This has the effect of giving the story the qualities of a general novel concerned with the exploration of character and larger political issues, but unfortunately the basic sf format of the plot is at odds with this. As a blockbuster it begins and ends with all the drama one would expect, but the story tends to flag in the middle; while as a straightforward novel the plot is rather too neat and reliant on coincidences to be convincing. Nevertheless Herbert is to be commended for the serious ambition on display here, and this novel will probably have a healthy effect on his bank balance.

Run to the Stars by Mike Scott Rohan (Arrow, £1.95) is a first novel set in the near future on an Earth which has become an unpleasant place to live in, being dominated by repressive politics enforced with all the paraphernalia of security screening and electronic surveillance. Little wonder that the fate of an interstellar expedition to a nearby star for the purposes of colonization is of great interest to enemies of the system. The author has published numerous short stories in recent years which show him as a witty and inventive writer, but this novel, while lively and strong on technol-

ogical detail, seems rather too hectic at times, as if it's afraid of being boring. The action ranges from Scotland to China and beyond, with a multi-national cast. It's creditable that a writer should want to make his story as eventful as possible, but here the characters are rather constrained by the exigencies of the thriller format. I hope the author chooses a less frenetic storyline for his next novel which would allow his natural facilities for wit and irony more scope.

Familiar Spirit by Lisa Tuttle (New English Library, £1.50) tells of a young woman's haunting in a house inhabited by the spirit of a person called Jade. It's a horror novel, and yet it also manages to be a psychological thriller because the progress of the hauntings is very dependent on the personalities of the principal characters. The story takes a while to get into its stride but gradually gathers momentum and confidence as the various strands of the story are brought together to give an ending with a sting in the tail which is effective in both dramatic and thematic terms.

Ursula Le Guin has a new collection of stories entitled *The Compass Rose* from Gollancz at £7.95. I've always admired the grace and humanity of Le Guin's writing but found this collection somewhat disappointing. It's rather arbitrarily divided into six sections and contains a number of quite short stories which seem to me to be mostly disposable because they are experimental pieces which do not really come off. Le Guin is clearly attempting new forms and approaches in many of these stories, but the fact is that she's at her best when employing more traditional kinds of narrative with strong character interest. The longer stories in this volume are generally the best. By most standards this is a respectable enough collection, but Le Guin would have been better served if she had omitted most of the shorter pieces.

Ielfstan's Place by Richard Girling (Hamlyn, £1.95) is not strictly speaking fantasy, but it contains more imagination than a shelf-full of ordinary sf books. It's a series of short stories set at different times in the past and linked in that they all take place in the same setting, that of the present-day Dartmoor village of Ilislington. The book is, in effect, a fictionalized history of the place from 15,000 BC to 1919. And a splendid achievement it is, too. The author must have done a lot of historical research, but he's assimilated it properly and he writes beautifully. His crowning achievement is that he manages to portray his characters as people of their time, dominated by imperatives quite different from our own. Ultimately *Ielfstan's Place* is less a tale of a village than of the changing values and customs of the humans who have inhabited it over thousands of years. A vivid and thoroughly refreshing book. ●

Last month television writer Nigel Kneale related some of the stories behind the creation of his *Quatermass* series. Now he discusses the most recent *Quatermass* and his other work for television.

Starburst: You have been quoted as saying that you weren't happy with the final *Quatermass* story. Why was that?

Kneale: It's a comforting thought that nobody was very pleased with the outcome of *The Quatermass Conclusion*. It wasn't only me. It did, of course, have great production values, but I could have done with a better story. It was so predictable. In the originals, you were always one step ahead of the audience, they couldn't outguess you. It wasn't a case of "the Butler did it". They were science-fiction mystery plays, pure and simple. Will there be anymore *Quatermass* stories?

No, *Quatermass* is finished. He won't be back.

One of your most controversial tv scripts was *The Year of the Sex Olympics*. How did that come about?

The idea originated from the sudden permissive society syndrome that happened in the late sixties. The play certainly wasn't an anti-sex story, rather anti-television. It centred around a Government decision to allow a 24 hour tv station devoted to pornography. It was in fact a plot by the State to prevent an increase in the already growing population. They worked on the assumption that if people could watch five sex on television and maybe watch it being performed a lot better, then they would soon lose interest in it themselves. It was commenting on a future society where there was television, television and television and nothing else to do. To stop audiences flagging, there would occasionally be a super year, a contest of sexual athletics. Unfortunately, people became bored with this, they weren't even laughing any more. One day, however, someone is accidentally killed on camera. The viewing figures rose overnight. So a future answer is found and a new style of programme is born. A fascinating idea. Do you watch a lot of television yourself?

Well, I record a lot of things, but find that I never get the time to watch them. I think videos are a kind of guilt machine, they watch the programme for you. With two, three or even four machines you wouldn't need to watch anything at all. One series of yours that was never repeated was *Beasts*. What do you remember about it?

Well, I remember the modest fee I received for the sale of *Beasts* to Saudi Arabia. ITV still have the master tapes and kindly ran off a set for me.

One episode that made an impact on me was the one entitled *During Barty's Party*, in which a house of people are menaced by thousands of rats.

I wanted it to be a version of *The Birds*



without any birds. At ATV we couldn't fill the stage with rats, so I based the story on the fact that you didn't see them at all. With creepy sound effects and convincing actors it was possible to achieve the required effect without any visuals.

I remember a scene where two of the characters in the play look out of a window and see an abandoned car by the side of the road with its doors flung open. Was this your idea as the rest of the story concerns itself purely with the interior of the house?

No, I didn't want that in, but it was included to make the story more scary. It needs a shock beginning, the producers told me. Their attitude was that if you don't have a gunfight within the first five minutes, then nobody would bother to

watch it. Seeing it now it still sends a shiver up my spine. Another episode called *The Dummy*, I based on the shooting of a Hammer film, which is one of the most uproariously funny things I'd ever seen. They were always terribly cosy, ladies knitting in corners, making tea amid the blood and gore. In many ways it was a personal tribute to those films and how they were made. In this one, the man in the bullet-proof monster suit is having a nervous breakdown. His wife has left him and is now living with the leading man in the movie. He finally snaps and becomes the monster, body and soul. It's one of my favourite movies.

One of your excursions away from tv was the script for the feature film *First Men In The Moon*. Were you happy with the outcome?

I did a script, but they began to tamper with it, so I left halfway through. The problem the producers faced on that film was that the Americans were probably going to land on the moon in the foreseeable future and this would seriously shorten the life of the movie, so I decided to start the story on a modern note, beginning with a moon landing by a United Nations exploration team. In Wells book it ends with a moon full of Selenites, but we thought it would be clever to have the modern astronauts find a dead civilisation due to having been wiped out, a century before, by Professor Cavor's cold. The film was criticised for being too tongue-in-cheek and yet there is a great deal of humour in the original novel.

Your most recent tv series was *Kinvg*. Was it as successful as you hoped it would be?

Kinvg was ruined through bad planning. Here was what I considered to be an accurate view of one of those people who believes in flying saucers. But the sort of audience that would enjoy a programme of this type was certainly not the same audience that watched the programme that ITV chose to screen before it. A dreadful American show called *Spider-Man*. The BBC are a law unto themselves, they didn't care what time they put things on. ITV on the other hand, are splintered in to a number of different regions and some channels were even showing *Kinvg* as a children's programme. This sort of thing killed it completely. It also fell foul of that most terrifying of institutions, the studio audience. Whole rows of instant people who have rolled in to the tv station because it's free and not because they are at all interested in what is happening in front of them. They laugh at all the wrong things, perhaps because something they see reminds them of a laugh they had on the coach on the way to the studio. It's very off-putting for the actors. So ITV said that *Kinvg* was not making the relevant viewing figures and so it was axed. A decision that I was extremely disappointed about.

Continuing last month's look at videos of Dario Argento films we come to his finest: *Suspira*, of course, is the film which made Argento's name in this country — two factors contributing to this — unlike his earlier films (and *Suspira's* successor, *Inferno*) the film received good West End

climaxing in a blood-spattered corpse crashing through a coloured glass roof; finally, Harper's confrontation with the hideous, ancient witch Elena Markos — the diabolic force behind the academy — satisfyingly rounds off a film rich with splendid technical effects (described in *Starburst 44's* earlier retrospective).



exposure end secondly - it justified the trumpeting.

This was because *Suspira* was unlike anything audiences had seen before — a visually phantasmagoric *tour de force*, scored with a thumping wall-to-wall score by Goblin (which combined the sustained menace of more conventional symphonic scoring with atmospheric rock rhythms — and heeded to brilliant advantage in four-track magnetic sound).

Here, however, comes the qualification in any welcome for the cassette version. To be blunt, unless you've seen *Suspira* in a West End cinema, irritating censorship cuts notwithstanding, (the cassette is uncut), you haven't really seen the film. It is designed as a total war on the senses, and tiny tv speakers and screens simply do not do it justice.

However, to make the best of a video viewing of the film, one can do some things to help:

- Connect your video recorder (audio out) to your stereo amplifier (if this is possible — be careful if you are not sure how to do this; advice from someone qualified would help to avoid short-circuited equipment!)
- Sit close to the screen in a totally darkened room — the video picture quality is very good, and picture definition will not suffer from this.

It almost goes without saying that the above will benefit any film (video or otherwise) on tv, but Argento's shockers virtually demand it!

The plot (minimal, to say the least) has Jessica Harper (of *Phantom of the Paradise*) as a new student in the sinister Friberg Academy in Germany; students end staff are decimated in spectacular fashion (the opening sequence in which Argento makes the heroine's arrival look like a magical passage into some Dantesque nether world is followed by the most stunning double murder ever filmed,

Suspira was described as the first part in a projected trilogy, of which only the second, *Inferno*, has yet appeared. *Inferno*, which had a limited release in 1980 (virtually buried by the distributor — their lack of faith being very short-sighted in the light of *Suspira's* financial success) is certainly a falling off from its predecessor, despite the film's virtues.

One of the film's failings, the over-long running time of 107 minutes, can be virtually undercut on video. Watching the film in two halves of an evening (with a gap for a meal or whatever) does not destroy the film's mood (Argento exerts his grip again very quickly) and removes any problems with the rather leisurely unfolding of a typically slim story.

This involves Irene Miracle as a young woman who discovers, via an occult book (shades of *Rosemary's Baby*), that the New York apartment house into which she's moved, is one of three designed by an architect named Varelli for the sinister "Three Mothers" of Whispers, Tears and Darkness (here we have the tie-in with *Suspira*); the breath-taking sequence in a water-submerged room near the beginning in which Mario Bava was involved, is unquestionably the best thing in the film — dream-like horror has never been captured so brilliantly on celluloid.

Her subsequent death (savagely butchered along with a friend, Cerlo) and its investigation by her brother Mark (Leigh McCloskey) comes across as a less tense re-working of "Suspira"; nevertheless, as with any Argento film, some very satisfying felicities catch the eye — the brevity use of massive close-ups of looks as a character is menacingly pursued; a grisly attack by rats in a park which has a marvellous twist at the end of the sequence, and the score by Keith Emerson (instead of "Goblin") is very effectively used — like Hitchcock with the inestimable Bernard Herrmann, Argento knows the immense value of music in

suspense situations — even the chorus from Verdi's "Nabucco" is employed with great effect in the film.

Certainly, the already converted will find much to enjoy in the film, and a less-than-perfect Argento is still streets ahead of a great deal of the so-called horror titles available on video. But perhaps the film seems more disappointing because of our high expectations — although the last reel of the film is unquestionably a disappointment — an unsatisfactory, slightly risible death of one major villain, and a very conventional conflagration to round things off.

Notwithstanding these qualifications, *Inferno* is still a must-see film; accept the imperfections, and you'll be gripped throughout — a guarantee! Soon, one hopes, the video of *Tenebrae* will be reviewed in this column.

On VTC's February list, a film called *The Strangeness* (directed by David Michael Hillman) prompts some speculations on the use of stop-motion animation in horror movies. With the odd worthy exception (such as *Fiend Without a Face*) the Harryhausen technique has most often been used in fantasy contexts, where the Arabian Nights "unreality" of cyclopan giants, etc, dovetails perfectly with the setting. The effect of stop-motion is one of "observed wonder" — more appropriate to, say, mythological creatures, than the grisly jack-in-the-boxes of the horror genre. (*Alien* works precisely because one is not allowed time — until a rather too lingering glance at the climax — to study the brilliant prosthetic effects).

Mention of *Alien* is relevant to *The Strangeness* as the tentacular horror animated for the film by Mark Sawicki and Chris Huntly incorporates in its design a slivering maw very reminiscent of *Alien's* derelict spacecraft entrances. Certainly, the appearances of this beastie are welcome, as the film's characters (a motley group exploring the abandoned — and cursed — Golden Spike Mines) hardly sustain interest except as fodder for the creature. This is due more to the acting (adequate in juve leads, very inadequate in the older characters) rather than production deficiencies. Still, one for genre fans; nice to see "teenagers in jeopardy" from something other than a masked knife-wielder!

Genre fans should note that *The Beast* (VTV) is another of Walerian Borowczyk's erotic fantasies rather than a tale of threatening monsters (the eponymous creature is reminiscent of the ape-thing in *Schlock* — a decidedly tongue-in-cheek creation, deliberately unfrightening). The print is the B.B.F.C. copy.

War of the Monsters (Derann) has the indestructible Godzilla involved in another monster slugfest, acting again as amiable defender of Earth (while raising Tokyo yet again). Undemanding kiddie fare ●

FREAKS



Freaks probably remains the most infamous horror film ever made. This is all the more extraordinary when one considers that it's over fifty years old, was banned in England until 1963 and has never been shown on television in this country. Even odder is the attitude that most people have about it. Mention *Freaks* to most film buffs and it is dismissed as something of a sick aberration in the otherwise illustrious career of its director Tod Browning. The most astonishing aspect of this attitude is the people who dismiss it so readily have never actually seen it!

Despite its age *Freaks* remains perhaps the most powerful "shock" film ever made and rather being the nadir of Browning's career it is indeed the pinnacle of the eccentric writer/director. Browning was born in 1882 in Kentucky, U.S.A. At an early age he ran away to join the circus, and it was no doubt that here the seeds of his film were born. Following a stint in vaudeville, Browning went to Hollywood where he became an actor and indeed played a part in D.W. Griffith's *The Mother and the Law*. Griffith realising Browning's talents were greater than those of a thespian, promoted him to an assistant director, in which capacity he worked on *Intolerance* for the master alongside such other soon-to-be-famous directors Erich Von

Stroheim and W.S. (Woody) Van Dyke.

Browning made his directorial debut in 1916 with *Jim Bludso* for Triangle Fine Arts Pictures. In those days of multiple film making on the same lot, Browning found himself churning out picture after picture, showing his true forte in assorted crime melodramas such as 1921's *Outside the Law*. In 1924 he teamed up with the legendary Lon Chaney Sr to make *The Unholy Three* and it began a fruitful alliance which produced such Chaney classics as *The Blackbird*, and *The Road to Mandalay* (both 1926), *The Unknown* and the superb and long lost *London After Midnight* (both 1927) and *West of Zanzibar* in 1928. He also directed, in 1927, *The Show* with John Gilbert. Interestingly, the latter, along with the Chaney vehicles *The Unholy Three*, and *West of Zanzibar* and another Browning outing, *The Mystic* were all set against the backdrop of the circus, another pointer to the classic big top drama Browning was to make some years later.

The hallmark of all of Browning's films was their truly weird sense of the bizarre. Sets, production design and performances were all geared to a surreal effect and the "art intelligentsia" of the day saw much more to admire in a Browning film than run of the mill movie entertainment. It goes some way to

appreciating the director's talent that when his films are seen today that whatever creakiness they may display in plot and technical datedness, they still exert that same peculiar and somewhat "unhealthy" power.

In 1931, with the sound revolution starting to move into full swing, Browning was contracted by Universal to make the film version of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. It was a project that Browning had often discussed with Chaney, but unfortunately Chaney's ill health delayed the collaboration and on the actor's death the film languished until Bela Lugosi, who had become synonymous with the part through his highly successful theatrical interpretation, was signed to essay the screen version. The rest, as they say, is history.

Browning's film version of *Dracula* was a relatively faithful adaptation of the play rather than Stoker's original novel. Browning has always been more at home in the silent medium and it is the dialogue-less passages of the vampire film landmark that are the most successful. Following *Dracula* Browning directed a boxing story *Iron Man* by hard-boiled ►

fiction specialist W.R. Burnett. By all accounts a tough movie, it starred Lew Ayres and Jean Harlow.

In 1932, with *Frankenstein* breaking all box office records the other studios were busily looking for something in the horror vein to emulate Universal's success with Karloff's shambling monster. MGM production whizz kid Irving Thalberg turned to Tod Browning with the instruction, "Give me something that will out-horror *Frankenstein*!" And that's what Browning did, but MGM could have had no idea that the film they were going to get was to cause waves of censorship problems both on the domestic front and in foreign territories, as well as being something of a *cause celebre* for many years.

The story of *Freaks* is based on a tale by Tod Robbins called *Spurs* and was suggested to Browning by a well-known midget performer from Germany named Harry Earles. On one level *Freaks* is a classically structured revenge story set in a circus. It involves a beautiful but convincing trapeze artist, Cleopatra, played by Moscow Arts Theatre performer Olga Baclanova. While she is having an affair with the circus strongman Hercules (Henry Victor), little Hans, one of the midgets, becomes infatuated with her. At first Cleopatra is repulsed by his advances but when she discovers that Hans is extremely wealthy she cultivates the relationship and marries him. While still continuing her affair with Hercules she starts to slowly poison Hans and convinces him to leave her all his money. With Hans' mysterious illness becoming obvious, the other freaks from the side-

shows discover the plot. In a rain-soaked night of horror they exact a terrible revenge on Cleopatra and Hercules, castrating the latter and surgically altering the once beautiful trapeze artist into a horribly deformed "chicken woman".

It remains to Thalberg's credit that despite MGM's hesitancy over what was obviously going to be such a controversial subject, the young producer stood behind Browning throughout the production, although once the film was previewed Browning was pretty much on his own and the subsequent re-cutting of the film to make it more "palatable" went on for several years.

The above brief synopsis would indeed seem to indicate that *Freaks* is somewhat distasteful. However, Browning saw the film as an opportunity to make a film showing the real inhumanities of man. No doubt, as a young man working in a real circus he was able to see first hand the way genuine circus freaks lived and reacted to a world which was as abnormal to them as the world of freaks appears as "abnormal" to outsiders. Browning loved the world of the circus and in particular had a fondness for those deformed through nature who had been exploited by showmen through the ages. A close look at the still which features





Browning surrounded by the freaks indicates the affection with which he regarded his friends.

Freaks is very much framed as a fable. The film opens on a seedy sideshow. As the small crowd huddles around the various human oddities the sideshow barker draws their attention to a low pit. As the onlookers recoil in horror at the unseen monstrosity, the barker tells them the story of the creature in the pit and how she got that way. The movie then flashes back to the opening scenes in the circus. It shows the daily life of the freaks, and how like normal people they all have their day-to-day problems. It is in these scenes that Browning displays his unique talent in enabling an audience to identify with the freaks and believe in their real world. In some parts the sequence dallies a little too long on each individual freak, in a sense becoming a sideshow in itself, if not one of an exploitative nature. One really does believe in this world to the point that when a normal person enters the scene it comes as a slight shock and for that split second there is the sense that the normal is the "abnormal".

In many ways *Freaks* is a forerunner of the E.C. horror comic at its best. Like Bill Gaines' notorious creations *Freaks* is

a moral tract — the evil of this world will always find a fitting retribution, and indeed many of the closing images from *Freaks*, as the creatures slither through the rain and mud armed with all sorts of oddly sharp instruments, recalls similar imagery often found in the work of Ingels, Wood and Kamen twenty years later.

Freaks, once completed, was previewed in San Diego. The results were horrifying with most of the audience reeling in disgust at the succession of bizarre scenes which confronted those 1932-sensibility eyes. One woman was even seen to run up the aisles, screaming!

Freaks went back to the cutting room and a portion of the ending was changed. No longer was it made explicit that Hercules was emasculated, though in some prints of the film he can be barely discerned standing on a box in the same sideshow as the mutilated Cleopatra. Still, the film found scant favour, with most critics finding little to recommend it. In a forerunner of the video nasties debate, a woman wrote into a contemporary film magazine declaring, "*Shows like Freaks and The Public Enemy can be seen for ten cents by any child.*" Some things never change, it would seem.

The film was banned in several states



while others simply hacked it down to what local exhibitors and censors found acceptable. It was banned outright in England and Australia, along with that other great Hollywood exotica, *Island of Lost Souls*. *Freaks* certainly shares with *Island* an odd perversity and nightmarish quality quite unlike any of the other horror films of the 30s.

So what makes *Freaks* such a tour de force to this day? Merrit B. Gerstad's cinematography is almost completely documentary in style, save for the sequence in which the freaks slither and crawl through the mud on their trail of retribution. While the midgets are centre of the action Gerstad brings his camera down to their level, involving the viewer in their lives and their perspective of the world around them. But it is Browning's understanding of the freaks world and the compassion which he so obviously felt for them that is at the heart of the feature and *Freaks* is surely a film with a heart. The characters of Cleopatra and Hercules are so irredeemably evil that the Justice meted out to them seems nothing short of fitting. On the other hand, Browning is willing too to show the viewer the strange freemasonry of this odd band. This is most apparent in the wedding feast scene after Cleopatra has married the hapless Hans. As the camera pans around the table we sense the growing feeling of revulsion that Cleopatra feels towards her new "family". As the wedding cup is passed from mouth to mouth and a strange chanting ensues, "*She is one of us.*" we experience her growing horror and receive a foretaste of the surreal violence to come. Cleopatra has entered a world she is eager to exploit through her plans to kill Hans, but at the same time has also entered into a society bent on protecting its own, even unto death and mutilation.

What seemed to upset audiences in 1932 and even today was the use of real freaks. Made today *Freaks* would require all the modern make-up expertise available. Despite the genius of the likes of Jack Pierce and others of his contemporary ilk, it would have been impossible to make *Freaks* in 1932 with the use of make-up. Besides, Tod Browning had worked and lived among freaks in his days in the circus. To him they weren't "abnormal" people, and as mentioned it was his good friend Harry Earles (who played Hans in the film) who had suggested that he make the film at all.

Freaks is one of Hollywood's genuine oddities. A film with a massive reputation, mostly of the misunderstood variety. It turns up at late night shows occasionally. Its running time now is 61 minutes. MGM's original running time was closer to 90 minutes. What exactly is missing is anybody's guess. But even in the bowdlerised version we can now only see, it remains a real masterpiece of the macabre and probably the only horror film with a heart, that of Tod Browning.



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